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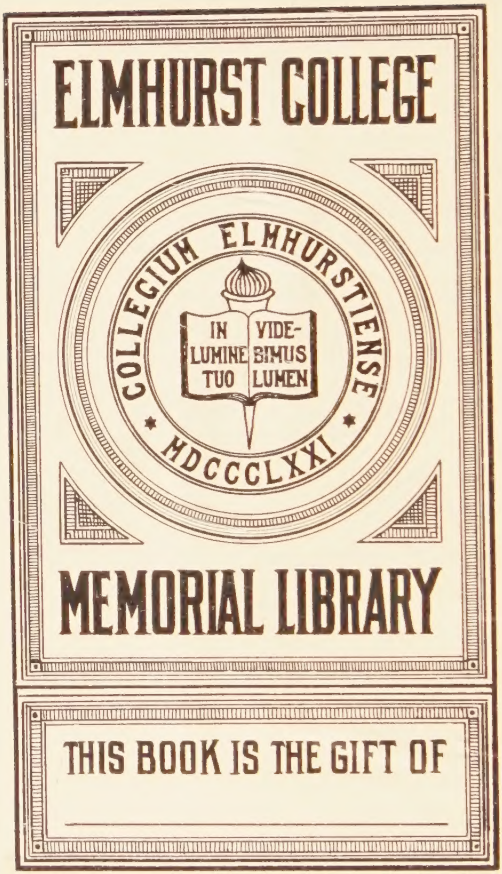
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With Earth and Sky

By
WILLIAM A. QUAYLE

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I

A GUST OF WONDER

THE wonder about wonder is its everywhereness. Ubiquity is its sure mark. It breaks on you at the time when you could least think it could. It is evermore abroad like an immortal traveler. It goes as the permitted apostles of the Master with neither staff nor scrip. It carries provender and perpetual shelter for itself. Stars are not farther going nor more self-sufficing.

On a day I was driving in southwest Wisconsin. By the month it was June and by the sky it was June and by the perfume it was June and by the blossoming it was June. No contradiction assailed the personality of June. We went leisurely. Another drove and garrulously wandered from theme to theme, in the main meaningless, but every now and then breaking through into the neighborhood of the loveliness of poetry. If anybody talks enough, he is as certain to flash into poetry as a prairie is to flash out into flowers. I was left to drift. The infinite was what we were driving through and all I had to do was to pay the driver. My hands were free. While physically I was being hauled, meta-

physically I was walking—walking out, walking on. If all the wings that ever bear birds above the world into the lovely, lonely sky had been attached to my shoulders and had borne me in transport where wings never had borne any flying thing, I had not been so free of earth and so fetterless, so supreme. I was looking, looking, and at what was I looking? Why, verily, at everything. He who has seen many golden days, shall he though a-journey over the same landscape take the landscape for granted? The plain answer of experience is, He may not. I have learned that. So when my Jehu drove, I out and walked. I could have proven an alibi on his vehicle and could have refused him remuneration on the ground that I was not in his buggy. I was far enough away and solitary like a lost eagle and walking out and grateful as if I had been an angel. It is so royal to be blood kinsman of earth and sky and to salute them in answer to their speed and rush and glory.

So on drove the driver and on walked the driven (to wit, myself). The splendid apocalypse girded me about. To the last molecule of me I felt the appeal of an earth eagering to grow harvests for the world. Not a thought of fret or anger at the labor of it, only supreme gladness at the heavenly endeavor of it.

And then came the gust of wonder, a red clover field, affluent in bloom with a tropic

abundance of flowering, perfect as a perfect rose-bud ready to bloom but not blooming, into which mass of pink loveliness came romping a troop of dwarf prairie roses! The clover heads swung lovely as evening sky-tint and the roses beside them and among them in full bloom! How it happened I cannot say. It did happen, is what I say. That is any happening's perfect proof. Had I been asked from my watching wild roses in bloom, to express an opinion as to whether it were permissible to believe they could grow off a settled rooting in unplowed ground of prairie or of roadside or in pasture or woodland, I had given quick rejoinder that they could not, and that they had to have permanency of rooting which could not occur in plowed field. A plowed field I think to be the happiest rooting for dog-tooth violets. On my own little farm I have observed the exuberant blooming of that quiet memorial of the early spring. No share seems to uproot them. They like its surly surgery and with a sunny spring leap out to bloom like children to morning laughter. I have, not occasionally, traveled a thousand miles to see my dog-tooth violets bloom and felt myself amply repaid. But prairie roses, however, I thought indigenous to settled ground alone where no plow ever disturbs the quiet roots. They ask no farming save what God gives them. All the years of my watching for them across the swaying windy prairies had made me of settled con-

victions as to their necessities, while here, all of my knowledge was turned into fatuity by one fact. Where they had every reasonable reason not to bloom they were blooming. I thank God for this sweet departure.

Red clover and prairie roses, civilization and primitive nature, shining and glowing together at the behest of the June wind blowing fair. I could not believe it, yet saw it. My cocksureness about things I know, blew from me as the winds from the scented field blew on me. What I don't know seems to insist on being more aggressive and masterful than what I do know. Here was the thing that never happened, which is a way poetry has.

Prairie roses swift with bloom on a level with the clover tops, rocking in assonance with the clover blooms' witchery, ridiculously inappropriate yet heavenly appropriate, here actually happening! Ah me, for the sight of it my heart was glad as laughter; and I had one other added proof that the impossible is pretty necessarily certain to happen, seeing the Chief Poet is still out walking through his world, thrumming on his lute, and composing a new lyric for the gladdening of the world.

II

ON THE BANKS OF THE DELAWARE

ON a bonny day of early advent of the spring in the State of New Jersey, I was asked did I wish to visit Washington's Crossing of the Delaware. I replied that whoever crossed the Delaware I wanted to visit that noble river. The river was significance enough. What needed anybody more? Few things are so engaging to the imagination any way, as a river. The unhurried or hurried current, the breadth, the uncertain depth which always has the seeming of deep depths, the strong, majestic, forward, always forward, simple tenacity of purpose in going where it knows not, but must go, and fears not what banks or shoals it meets, but onward as certainly, though less swiftly, than a stream of stars along the far spaces where the night is lost in its own blackness. What a brave fearlessness a river is and how adept it is in hearing the silent, voiceless voices of the far-off calling! I stand beside a river and am afraid. Down and on, on and down, nor fretting nor wearying nor angering, but only hungering, hungering forever for the sea it has not seen and depths it has not sounded. Wearying for the realm of loss

where this wide river shall disappear like a dewdrop in its flood, ah, river, whatsoever name thou wearest and wheresoever thy fountains are, thou hast a charmed life. By thy side nearsighted eyes grow farsighted and uneventful souls catch glimpses of the eventful and undying.

So a river—any river—clear as sunshine, or brown as the Missouri, or red as Red River, or green as the Yellowstone, or wild like Green River by the Pacific Sea, or somnolent as the Colorado, which is so fast asleep (as it neighbors on its last march to the toiling sea), so fast asleep that it mirrors not the stars and has not any flash of wave—a river, let me stand upon its bank and lean ear toward its plaintive whisper and fasten eyes on its sure-going flood and dream out and on with those waters which shall know no return and shall challenge no regret. What cared I for a crossing or who crossed? What was footpath across a wandering river? And the request, with oneself, was in a manner just.

The river would seem to be the chief personality, whatever landscape it wore its highway across. You can scarcely in moods of extravagant dreaming express a formulary of sublimity more engaging and enthralling than a river. Sometimes it holds me even as an ocean cannot. Truly, not at all times. In the long reach of years and life the ocean has easy transcendency. It doeth with us as it will. It has not a competitor save the sky. Its engulfing is as the

engulfing of eternity. But the river has its haunting as of the eternities also. It goes nor rests nor cares but only maketh music in the darkness or the day, careless also whether any hear or no, or whether any listen or no. A river is a pilgrim of eternity. Where the last wave-wash before the tireless silence shall lave the shore it neither cares nor thinks on. Outward, outward, the river must minister unto its master, the sea.

But mine host brings his nag and chariot—or maybe the wording is amiss, for whether they ever in the ancient days of chariots hitched a single steed to a chariot I wot not. But it matters little. The meagerest buggy to which meagerest modern nag is harnessed is more palatable to be drawn in than the most gaudy chariot of forgotten days. The chariots stood flat against the axle: the buggy has a spring. That signifies the difference between our to-day and their yesterday. We have caught the spring of the swaying bough on which only the bird used to ride. We are become birdlike in our voyages and comfort. A buggy instead of a chariot, what say you moderns? All who favor say "Aye." The ayes have it. We will climb to our seat in the modern chariot and proceed.

"Whither go you, my friend, the charioteer?"

"To Washington's Crossing."

Our friend has memory. That is clear. This is the same place he mentioned at the start.

He cannot be diverted. But come to think on he has been a presiding elder, and such cannot be diverted. They are brothers-in-law to the pole star. So we start. We are a company of three beside myself. They can outvote me. But one is a woman who cannot vote, but of what avail? I am still outvoted unless I stuff the ballot, which, being a minister, I cannot be brought to think of. Honesty is, as it were, hereditary with me. I shall be outvoted. Whether I favor the Washington's Crossing or not, we shall as a party proclaim its worthiness.

All this I foresee. But foreseeing the inevitable works no help. We will bear it whether we grin or not. But the New Jersey spring is in its first leaf. The branches are budded with greenery. The ravines along the road, each ravine going to Washington's Crossing as I silently perceive, has its little whisper of gladness in the sun; and the trees which bear blossoms have them in perfume and plenty, and the sky has the indefinable witchery of the early daytime of the year, and the birds in the migration or occupation are having their way with the sky and the ground, and the sun, westering, has its gladdest wonder in its looks; and when then we have trotted on a while (but harken, did chariots trot? I profess me agnostic on this point in Latinity and have neither time nor mood to look it up), jogging on (for I am pretty certain chariots jogged along), we came in time to a hill-

top from whose watchtower gleamed the Delaware.

How my heart answered to the river yet unreached, and stretched out arms as to someone I loved! The Delaware, full of song and story and history! The Delaware—and where beside have I read the name?—and we proceed. It is ascertained that chariots did proceed, therefore are we now on plainly classical footing, and adventure forth fearlessly.

And we come down from the hill into the croft; and all the ravines come down with us in a fine fit of good manners, and each ravine contributes its modicum to the Delaware, so sealing itself as tributary forever after the manner of the ancient subordinates who gave tribute. And my friend who directs the vaticinations of our nag draws lines suddenly and withal fearlessly and says in voice a little military, if I mistake not, "*Washington's Crossing.*"

Whereupon I become attent as becometh a mannerly guest, and he discourses in fine enthusiasm on the night ride which General Washington and his hungry and thin-clad soldier followers took among the floating ice and, ferried over, fight the Hessians out, and fight the republic in. The crossing to the Battle of Trenton and to the soldier renown of sedate George Washington, the crossing to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution and the Monroe Doctrine, the crossing to the settled faith that this New

World belongs inalienably to man as man and to man forever.

What has become of the Delaware? It has vanished utterly. I see no single shimmer of any wave. What has happened to the Delaware? Why, *Washington's Crossing* has happened to the Delaware. The river has been blotted out by the deed. The river has succumbed to the man. Man is greater than great rivers, and a great deed done in simple manliness for world's manhood and its gain and dominion is still the episode for which the rivers and the hills were made.

Washington's Crossing has blotted out the Delaware. Its channel might as well be dry. Rivers are they by whose banks and on whose currents mighty souls work mighty deeds whose unfretted message makes its way through all the skies of all the years. Man is majestical. And at the last man and his sublime activities are the solitary majesties upon this earth for which the rivers and the massy hills and the far-going seas are solely backgrounds dim as a shadow of a mountain on a stream by night.

III

DANDELIONS

I ADMIT it. *Mea culpa!* Vainly have I tried amendment. It was but a gust and could not tarry. I cannot break friendship with that flower of riotous and inspiring sunshine. Loved it I have and love it I will. No one need argue with me. I am past that. They have argued with me and have argued me down. I have been ignominiously routed and have been sent at dizzying pace to uproot the dandelions on the lawn, but could not compass it. They looked at me and I was lost. Had I been blind, I think I should have been a mole and dug on, uprooting sunlight without a sigh. But I was not a mole and I was not blind, and the beckoning gladness of the wild rush of riotous loveliness carried me away on its swift-rushing torrent as I have been carried away by Rogue River in Oregon, where the stones along the bottom were slippy with moss and roundish of form and the foot could not hold and the water was swift and shivering and I could not hold my own, but went incontinently "downward with the flood."

I know the dandelion has its faults, being in that particular a very human bit of growth. But

seeing I have lived with myself so long who am packed with faults as a locust with thorns, who am I to be uppish with others' faults? I do not admire the dandelion in all its activities. To be candid, its desire for posterity is a good deal too pragmatical and dogmatical. Nothing can stay its maternal instinct. However low you shave your lawn, the dandelion will, with mock humility, adjust its stature to your mowing, by rushing from leaf to bloom and from bloom to seed in a jiffy, and the gauze-winged seed floats away to keep the dandelion race alive. But bethink you, stern critic, 'tis instinct. And can we as Christians quarrel with instinct? We may reason with reason but we do not reason with instinct. Instinct does not argue: it proceeds. No one in his senses argues with a bee concerning the highway he takes across the sky when flying, honey-burdened, from flowers to hive: so the dandelion instinctively wages war for immortality. She cannot be converted. Perpetuate her species she will.

Some use dandelions for greens. They are esculent; and for one I like to see woman and child, basket on arm and knife in hand, wander over fields of the new spring, out to gather a pot of greens for dinner. The spring appetite is in the search. They have been eating canned goods all winter and know when they want a change. Really is not this call of the appetite for spring vegetables a sensible procedure, and

have we not who have greens in the winter and tomatoes out of season, have we not converted the season of edibles to our own impoverishment? I recall with zest such a rampage of hunger when, as a lad, I hailed the advent of the first radishes, and the first watermelon sent me turning happy somersaults. Now, through the proper household authority, I buy a radish insipid and unsapid and eat it with a shrug. And not all advancement is in progress. I shall not quarrel with such as, in spring appetite, search for and uproot dandelions. People have some rights the same as dandelions have. The entirety of privilege never does reside on one side of a garden fence, anyhow.

And some use dandelions for medicine. On whose authority I do not know, nor for what they are remedial can I guess. Though there may be justification in taking sunlight as a body would if he drank this flower. Dying that others may not die, is an heroical activity, though fatal to the hero. However, if a body be not out for spring greens, nor an herbalist intent on medical design, where is the justification of slaughter of these smiling innocents? I am temporary proprietor of a lawn, sown to grass (by assumption) but owned by dandelions, in fact. I have been bidden to expurgate this text of the dandelion. The bid has been dictatorial and without any pivot and misunderstanding. My instruction is unequivocal, if the truth be whispered, but I have been bound to reply that it would be a less task

to uproot the grass. The dandelions had the right of way. If possession be points in law, then the dandelion in this yard may stand on his rights, for he is unquestioned occupant. He has not debated; but neither has he abated. He is not deploying in skirmish lines but is here in full force. While you are uprooting one plant a number of others have rooted. Just how soon you may extirpate a race which is born three times as fast as it dies I leave to statisticians to figure out. I am no statistician. I am a Christian and a brother. Mark you, I have not refused to reclaim the lawn and make it a grass lawn. Far from that. I am no Innocent abroad, but a man chastened in spirit and studied in sobriety; but the lawn shows no progress. In fact, according to my domestic authority it is in a state of retrogression, and this I cannot deny. But can a man do more than a man can? I go through the motions, I uproot no grass: I uproot some dandelions, but if they succeed in their own defense in undoing my doings, can I be blamed? My appeal is to the fair-minded and humanitarian. In our home a good man can anticipate no fair verdict. The dandelion shall own this lawn. They do not attempt: they succeed. As a matter of whispered confidence, I may intimate that their open disobedience to the undisputed head of our house gives me interior delight. I grieve to see that sign of male depravity in me; but it is there. My spirit, I plainly see, is bent but not

broken. I could leap into rebellion myself if there seemed any reasonable ground for thinking it could succeed. Yet multitudinous attempts having ultimated in ignominious failure, it seems useless to rebel. There is no fun in getting squelched. There is, I am informed, fun in squelching, though that is gossip. I have no personal information under that head. Outwardly, I am unsmiling and, to look at, even rancid, but inwardly I am booming in salvos of laughter. Every dandelion which in flat defiance of the head of this house bursts into laughter like a peal of bells, charms me and challenges me in the phrase of Lady Macbeth, "My lord, sleek o'er your rugged looks."

Lest I make myself misunderstood, I haste to say that my love for the dandelion is not rooted primarily in the delight I find in beholding the head of our house defied. No, that attitude of mind is, so to say, a thistle which grows in my soul, but my soul is not a thistle field, but a dandelion field. I love the dandelion, love its lavish unsullenness, its untamable glee, its amazed gold, its intricate splendor, its fabulous wealth, its declaration that close against the ground may spring a glee and glory which words do but encumber and do not elucidate. They are the very blossoming out of the eternal and regal surprise of this world. They transfigure the ground with daylight. They glow so that if the sun were dead, they could furnish the sky with dawn

though they be dwellers on the earth and not luminaries of the sky.

They make me kinsman of the resurrection. They leap like a sun-drenched thought. They do not grow: they alight like an angel at the Bethlehem house. They are not sent for: they just come. Common folks they are, but clad in golden glory like children of a great king.

When winter has been long and rigorous and its closing months have been perverse and there seems no outcome of long weeks of sulky weather, save hope delayed, then the dandelions make a rush like somersaulting children and sprawling around abundant glory and embodied joy of arrived harvest, as of wheat fields all gold. They give no promissory note, nor send a blue bird with melodious bugle to declare their march, but tumble to the ground, sprawl about like a frolick of sunbeams kicking up, but do not kick up dust, but just sunlight, liquid sunlight and life at its spring.

Were anyone to aver me inebriated by this rollicking gold, I should not dispute nor demur. I should only look at the dandelion and bless God for its sunlight and multitude and roistering splendor like the wine of autumnal suns. God hath not often thought a sunnier thought than the dandelion at flower and the laughter of the world escaping like an angel from under the feet of outrageous winter. Winter is sinister, and the dandelion is the frankest mirth that laughs out

spontaneous, irrepressible and jubilant, the defeat of the morose and the sinister—the frankest voice of color that I know to turn unwholesomeness out of doors and bid him scamper to his sullen home and stay there for timeless days.

IV

THE JOY OF WINTER

SUCH as esteem winter a season to be endured—a frozen roadway leading to the redolence of spring—are far from the truth. We may fairly say they knew not the truth. Spring is radiant; winter is jubilant. Winter trumpets like a warlike troop. Each season has its own strength, seasonableness, serenity, violence, tenderness, tears, rejoicement, as the case may stand. Each season in its way is best; therefore those who endure winter are utterly amiss, and those who enjoy winter are utterly right.

Winter is ushered in by the leaf-fall of melancholy autumn and ushered out by the rejoicing of leaf-making of the gladsome spring. Ushered in by sadness and ushered out by joy; and its plateau lies high and cold like the giant uplands of the mountains. Let in of weeping autumn, let out of leafing spring.

Winter is the season of naked strength. Its trees have no shadow nor music of leaves. They stand unadorned. Their garment is their might. Birds are not in their gaunt branches, save now and then a redbird blazes like a sudden star and calls with a springtime voice from a winter woodland; and in naked thicket the chickadee calls

with his cricket voice, "Chickadee-dee-dee-dee!" And the night-clad crow caws with autumnal voice as to say all months are to his liking. But the music of winter is neither the music of leaves nor birds, but strident song of winter winds in branches. In winter wind is a weirdness which is to me like the blowing of bagpipes. This is the time of carnage, and battle calls fill the sky. The north wind puffs his cheeks and trumpets across the world. The flocks huddle, the herds shiver, the quails run in crowds fleet of foot as the very winds; the sparrows bicker from the hedgerows; the leaves huddle and toss at every whip of the wind and change their localities as frequently as a preacher.

The whole spacious world has become a roadway for the truculent winter winds. All is open. The north wind strides along the highways. He washes across the cold shock-tented cornfields like some devastating sea. He climbs the snowy mountains with a sudden angry leap. He takes the breath of travelers. He garments the whole landscape in storm. He hoots like the night owls; he whoops like a bloodthirsty Indian band; he carouses like a drunkard; he shrieks like a maniac; he is sleepless as a sick man; he moans like the broken-hearted; he shouts like men in battle; he drives, a mad charioteer; he curses like a gambler who has staked all and lost all. The winter wind goeth every whither, calls down the chimneys of the rich with a pitiful cry for admission, leaps into the frail houses of the very poor as if

he were the landlord and their rent past due, nips with fingers like pincers the noses of the adventurous, and pounces triumphantly upon the proud sea and pummels its wide waters with indignant fists till the sea boils like a pot.

Such are the doings of the winter wind. Do they make you shiver? Rather they should make you in battle humor. Indoors is no place for people in winter. Outdoors is the place. Shivering by the fire is justifiable for invalids only. In spring people go outdoors; in winter they go indoors; but the latter procedure is quite amiss. All seasons are outdoor seasons. Spring is time when we lie open to the sun; winter is time when men run races with the winds and the swift leaves and when we rejoice to feel the blood tingle and our pulses bound; when the fury of the world is on us; when the battles of our Viking folks survive in us. In winter we are not to flee from but toward.

I fear me we have not caught the spirit of winter. We make outdoor trips under protest. We take the short cut. We complain at the nip of the wind and the frost. We say, "It is below zero." We shiver from place to place. We date everything by how near spring is. All this is wrong, greatly wrong. Winter is frankly glorious. The slow are stung to speed. The worn feel the tonic that seems drifted with the winter snows. Lassitude is all but impossible when frost writes its poetry on kitchen windows and the snows crunch under the feet and the cold stars blink

with merry twinkle in their eyes as if to say, "Friends, how like you this weather?" Winter is to be regarded, as our friend at the White House would name it, strenuous; and the word would tell the whole truth.

This winter weather, when the wind makes tiger lunges at you, is good time for you to make tiger lunges at the wind. Winter wind is a great joker. He giggles much. He is inebriated when people are afraid of him. He blusters like a big bully when he dares. He likes to swagger when passengers of the outdoors are namby-pamby and play the timorous rabbit with him; but like him, be unafraid, understand him, and he is affable as a sailor fresh in port. What times we can have with the winter wind if we know how to take him. His voice is boisterous as if he were accustomed to talking to the deaf, but has whole skies of music in it. His manners are rude, but yet mannerly if you read his book of etiquette. If a body schools himself to enjoy winter, it is a season plethoric in delight. Earth loves it.

Rabbits know a thing. How they rollic in winter woods and fields! Have you seen them in moonlight of snowy nights? No? My friend, you are greatly to be blamed. Rabbits could teach most people the hilarity of winter. They do not fuss at the cold; they do not stay in of nights; they do not muffle up; they do not wipe the frost from their whiskers and blaspheme at the weather man. They carouse in the woods;

snows and glistening frosts and nipping winter breath call to them out loud. Have you gone out of early morning into the winter woods and across winter fields just for the fun of seeing how in the night the rabbit danced the Virginia reel and the "quintillion"? Did you never? And have you no sense of fitness nor of shame? To see the morning fields fairly littered up with the rabbit tracks where for sheer delight of happy hearts these timorous beasties danced jigs over all the fields, delirious in delight—this I think would convert any sane body to love of winter. For myself I confess to feeling like the rabbits when winter comes. But for being pious I would not put it past me to dance. But I run and shout and rejoice in the storm and call with the winds and regale me on the storm when the wild winds try to push me from the road and cannot do it. And to hear and see the forest take delight in the wrath of the tempests and hear the deep diapason of huge trees buffeting with huge winds—friend, that is fine.

Winter is life to body and spirit. Nothing dyspeptic can winter tolerate. When winter brawls you feel constrained to brawl a little yourself. You must walk fast or be frozen, and this alternative is good for the heart. However effeminate your spirit, you cannot quite escape the rhapsody of the winter wrath.

This is the season of strength. Brawniness becomes you. Large moods seem fitting. Winter is a lesson against whimpering. A naked world

not aching in the cold but rollicking in it and with it, is a lesson in enduring hardness. Complaints ought at this season to freeze on the lips. Let sleigh bells jingle; let the wolf lope across the sullen fields of snowy nights; let the recluse owl hoot as he goes about like a surly housewife getting supper ready; let the icy branches crack in the frosty air like riflemen at practice; let the bittersweet berries hang like garnets coated with frost; let the mobile river turn to stable shore where skaters may hold festival; let the cattle gather with their trustful eyes waiting for supper and the dark, making no complaint at anything for anybody. Watch the chickens as they set themselves to obeying the ten commandments for chickens—"Early to bed and early to rise"; see the mannish rooster bluster around among his silly brood of wives; hear the hens remark blithely, "I will lay an egg tomorrow"; hear at night the watch dog's bark—faithfulness finding a voice; hear the boom of waves on the lake shore and the crash of ice. Acclimate your soul to winter and you will be inclined to draft resolutions of sympathy for all who have no winter season.

And in winter the world looks so big. In summer the green world makes no vivid denial of the blue sky, but an ermine world has distinct controversy with the sapphire sky with the result that the world stretches very, very far. It seems not the same world as in summer.

It has grown spacious. The shore line of the sky has been buffeted back by the winter storm-winds. The wide, bleak landscape across which are farmhouses and herds of cattle and the slow, homelike curl of house smoke, minding you of dinner or supper coming on and making you sniff to smell the brewing coffee and listen for the frying meat; and the flocks of trees flocking in their hollows or standing back on the hills against the snowy background of far fields, and the thatched huts of the haystacks and the spire of the village church and the running of the vagrant stream—look at such a landscape tending slowly toward the sky but going so far before reaching it, and your world will seem to have been amplified by the handicraft of winter. Earth cuts large figure when winter goes barehanded out to chop wood for the fire of winter hearths.

How good the outdoors makes the indoors in winter, too! Summer makes indoors "stale, flat, unprofitable," as good Will Shakespeare was heard to say on occasion. Not so, winter. Indoors and outdoors both are good. Winter frosts his whiskers with his breath. When night winds howl like dervishes, how good to throw fuel on the fire, sit close hugging round in a circle of those you love the most, crack walnuts grown on your own woods if you have the woods, hear the wood crackle and see the flames leap chimneyward as eager to go gadding about in the winter sky. And this indoor comfort is

accentuated by the tempest outside. To this indoor comfort does Whittier's idyl, "Snow-bound," owe its enticements. Outside, the wild wind furious for journey, the melancholy moaning in the chimney or at the window sill, and the fierce shrieking in the resistful trees; inside, the calm like the calm of God, love and each other, and the snatch of song and the quick jest and the multitudinous laughter, and after all, the folding of the hands to pray to the good God of winter's storm and heart's-ease—this is like winter and summer joined into one to make an evening of divergent yet perfect delight.

The winter snows bank high and work arabesques and carven work of Pentelic beauty and snows shape into curves such as only quaint Giotto knew to make, and hills and valleys such as God dwells in else he had not made so many. Frieze and metope, staircase and arched work and ribband work of cloud whiteness and cloud daintiness, and the wind raging like a mad lion yet creating all the while those things rhythmical as poetry—so winter doth.

Brave winter, brawny winter, ruddy-cheeked winter with eyebrows white with frost and chin icicled like roof eaves, winter with blustering manners but a manly heart going on all fields as to trample life from their breasts, but in sober and inspiring truth trampling with frozen feet the field's breast into fertility and harvests yellow as old gold—winter, let all such as love things mighty love thee now and love thee ever!

V

ON MY FIRST FINDING TRAILING ARBUTUS

HOWEVER old a friend any wild flower may be, the coming on it is at each time a discovery. You cannot think it old and much less can you feel it old. It is a new thing under the sun. And if this is how we feel with a flower long known, how shall we feel when we find a flower of which poets have dreamed without weariness, whose poetry is perennial—and find it for the first time? My necessities of livelihood had kept me in zones not frequented by the trailing arbutus, so that when I was foot loose on long wandering in those belts where the faint yet pungent perfume of this flower of advent has its home, it was long past the time of its blooming. Its trail of clumsy vine and its pressure of coarse, thick leaf I had often seen lying sprawling close against the ground, but the flowering of it was to me a thing of faith. I saw through the poet's eyes and inhaled perfume through the poet's verses, and the "May flower," so far as visible bloom on the wildwood floor where it bloomed into beatitude, was remote as a myth.

The flower I had seen; for friends of mine, knowing my wistfulness for the trailing arbutus at flower, had many a time sent me nosegays of it, so that its look I knew and its odor I had inhaled; but those relations were not sufficient to satisfy the poetry of things. Moss sent in a box or seen in a basket is moss truly, but moss disfigured because unrelated. To see moss you must see it set on its bank where it makes its own forests and constructs its own wilderness and grows its own boscage. You cannot explain moss nor catch its altogether inexplicable wonder except to lie down on its sward and scrutinize its tracery and calm where never winds blow loudly nor wildly but where forever rests the quiet as of a bird's folded wing for sleep. No sample is to be accounted moss.

Thus is the trailing arbutus. Where it grows and as it grows it must be met with. The surprise of finding must mingle with its delicate odor and beauty. Detached from where it roots and dreams of earliest springtime and adventures forth first of the flowering hosts, it is more than lost. This wild flower is growing rarer year by year, more is the pity seeing it has commercial uses, and those who gather it for money and not for love have scant sense of the to-morrow but drag it from the mold as corsairs might, and so wrench root and all and so a flower has come to its funeral. Flowers sorrow not to be gathered. They were meant

for the blossoming, and care not who gathers them, child or woman or man or God. They have bloomed—that is at once their task and poetry. What happens and who happens as the gatherer they give no heed to. They have bloomed. But to uproot them is murder.

In New Hampshire mine host, a man of grace and one not lost to wonder, took me out along the pine woods' paths, along the stream when catkins hung in profusion on the white poplars; and we found where the trailing arbutus was at bud. Spring was barely come, if come at all, but the arbutus was a-wearying for the daylight and the spring light and would not wait—could not wait—and was holding up its clustered buds with a wistfulness that ached its way into a man's heart. What in any wise can be more touched with the infinite than flowers reaching toward blossoming? Who taught them spring was come? Why should they not lie still and low as they have months, long months past? And they do not. That is their mystery and their eternal poetry. And so I saw the buds of the arbutus scentless as the rocks among which they were attempting bloom; and I, poor traveler, must move on. I could not wait. Duties called and the tarrying of the May flower meant its birthday should not have me for one of the jubilant company, witnessers of its birth.

Then I came to Maine where only the swamp maples hold a hint of spring. They burned like

sunset. But no leaf hinted strongly at bud. The wind was sharp. The sea was near. From where we hunted the arbutus the sea was blue against the scene. The pines were moaning with the wanderings of winds fresh from their wanderings on the windy sea. What poetries are in pines and music wooed from them by sea winds! And here we men, a little company of watchers for the spring dawn, hunted the trailing arbutus if peradventure it might be at flower. The skies were dull: the evening was not far away; the seas sung in the pinetops; the granite bowlders lay careless whether spring came or whether flowers ever bloomed.

We hunted in ones, every man going his own way if so be there should come to him alone the miracle of the first scent and sea-shell tint of this earliest flower which has set all the New England bards at song. The leaves of oak trees which mixed with the pines covered the ground thick with their brown loveliness which all lovers of the woods count one of the mercies of the forest; and there where the leaves gathered thick and covered the earth so that not a spot of earth looked through, against a bowlder unscathed with years, I found the arbutus -the trailing arbutus at flower.

The scent was scarcely appreciable, the blossoms were so few and the flowers were barely visible, so hid beneath their coverlet of leaves: but O, the advent of it and the miracle of those

first wanderers forth to beckon to the spring! My heart sang out loud; and through the pine woods and the naked oaks I called, "Found! found!" I sat down and then sprawled on the leaves under whose grace of covert the arbutus grew and watched the wan faces of the earliest flowers. How gentle the perfume, how blushing pale the bloom! Through the dull anger of the unangry leaves of oak came the calm scent lifted from the quiet flower and I pulled the leaves aside and in their still underworld smiled the wistful flower of the daydawn of the year—smiling like an awakening dream, unafraid of surprise, vital but not discontented, only arrived at perfume and at flower—the trailing arbutus, first breaker of the winter's reign, calm, blessed witnesser of spring and the regality of bloom. I, born far from these zones of bloom, had seen the trailing arbutus neglectful of winter and his reign and wrath, and wistful for the spring and harbinger of the thing it was wistful for.

And yonder was the sea and here the flower; and which was greater marvel, none knew save God; and God held his peace.

VI

EN ROUTE THROUGH PARADISE

YOU, fond reader, think this a misprint for "En Route to Paradise." You think this article was penciled by this writer and you have heard the envious say that his chirography lacked excellence and legibility. Envy always does make itself evident when one man can write with a hand which Spencerian copy books would like to have employed in writing their copies. But, friend, this article was written on a typewriter, and is absolutely legible even to the envious. A ride *through* and not *to* paradise is what is talked of in this essay.

This is an episode of a railroad track. Not what was seen on the far-off fringe of fields and sky, but what was seen between the wire fences which with their barbs mildly suggested that this breadth of ground on either side the rails for a rod or two belongs to the road which pays taxes on the chance to run through this region. Since writing "A Walk Along a Railroad in June" some years agone, I have had no occasion to change my mind as told there. Specially in prairie places, the railroad redeems and establishes the regime which but for it has all but

utterly vanished from the earth. A prairie cannot be conserved in its wild wealth of beauty save where it is defended alike from the share of the plow and the cattle herd. There only the wild flowers spring and flutter like banners of an imaginary pageant and all the wild wonder of prairie growth has its way and wakens infinite wonder in such as care to see.

. . .

The journey was on the Chicago and Alton Railroad running from Saint Louis to Chicago.

The train was a flyer, and well named. It tarried not. I wish it had. But I would have trains stopping all the time if I were conductor on prairies these days of radiant spring. Trains never would arrive on schedule time. They might start by schedule, but they would proceed by a series of stops. Spring is so brief that to lose a minute of its bewildering career impresses me as a crime against the eternal beauty of the world. Well for the traveling public I am no conductor; I am a conducted. So we sped along. Things flung past me as in high dudgeon. Sometimes what was rushing by I could not make out. My eyes were not instantaneous. I made a rush to the window, as it were, but the couple had gotten past before I could make out who they were. It was a festival of color and shimmer and glancing lamps of many-colored flame. Used to the entrancement of the spring, yet all was new as

youth and as glad. Along the road the grass was vivid beyond compare. Anything looks lovely set down against such wonderful greenery as prairie grass. And I saw along our receding path dandelions and elders at bloom and wild dwarf roses worthy of the name the Indians gave them—a wild rose they named "*shonna*," which is as sweet as the wild rose itself; say no more for the sweetness of the name—glowing cavalcades of spiderwort of unfathomable blue; wild mustard with its swift yellow like a glancing light; early thistles clad in their antagonistic foliage, beautiful as tracery on a winter pane; wild parsnip in wealth of bloom and bounty of multitude and clad in old gold in clumps and ribbands and thickets, but all wealth like a captured argosy; and yellow sheep sorrel and muddy waters where the frogs are jubilantly singing by daylight; and white mock asters all a-nod in the wind, women asters nodding their heads as in talking; wild prairie phlox wildly crimson, and some pinkish, and others drowsing away toward sleepy blue; and some yellow bloom shaped like unto a primrose, whose name I could not give in the rush of passing, and it was standing tall against the wind, swinging like a wild canary on a wind-blown stalk; and the compass plant in fronds of extravagant witchery; and beside, wheat fields ripening a very little but splotched, and shadows which the wind made in the whirl across the yielding grain; flowers in white and sometimes

tinted with dim blue, distant blue, like lilies in a river of green; Indian arrows brown as their wont is but at rare flowers red as if they were fresh drawn from some deep wound; and then a blossom, deep yellow like a buttercup and yet larger of flower but whose identity escaped me, for the train was so swift and refused to stop amid fields but panted a little at stations where nothing was to be seen. Long pools of muddy water were here and there, in evidence where marsh grasses and reeds and cattails were indolently growing, and then once I saw a vivid crimson like a lily wounded and bleeding nigh to death. I could not tell what it was.

. . .

I had great mind to pull the rope and set the air and stop the train a spell; but it does beat all how although a passenger has paid his fare and has beside purchased a seat in the parlor car, he is not at liberty to run the train. Here is a thing, a definite evil under the sun, which the many tinkerers with the railroad bill should have included by way of amendment if not in original draft. It would have been much wiser than much which was included. But here was a passenger without the simple, elementary right to pull the rope and stop the train to get a full-face look at a prairie flower so as to be able to name it. Such are the infelicities of travel in civilized countries. Had I been journeying in a rickshaw, phantom or real, I could have stopped

and fed my fancy and have decreased my ignorance. Back to barbarism as Rousseau would have us, with a rush where there was abundant leisure to do everything but work, and where slow locomotion is all the locomotion there is, and where there is nice dirt long retained and where soap is not among the means of grace used nor any love of hill crest nor bloom nor wealth of growing maize. Back to barbarism, for then could I have tarried with the flower; but then in good barbaric days I would not have noted the flower nor cared for it had I noticed; so peace to thy querulous spirit, Brother Quayle. Better the civilization which loves the flower of the field as God, who set it blooming, loves it; better the swift train than the barbaric opaqueness to loveliness and infinite leisure used to no high purpose, dreamful purpose.

We dare not pull the air cord and we cannot alight from the speeding train gracefully when we are going fifty miles an hour. It has been tried but has not been really successful. But I would give a "purty" to know the name that tossing, teasing, crimson flower loved to be called by. Then the wild tansy stood with its creamy bloom. Once in a while on the railroad wire fence a post was festooned by wild ivy, and sometimes the barbed wires were redeemed from their antagonism by wandering wild grape vines with their tendrils and leaf and musk perfume of delayed blossoms. Wild elephant's

cars were being tweaked by the wind and did not resent the familiarity; and sometimes there was a dirty stream and betimes dirty boys with primitive fishing tackle and primitive delight—and I was whipped past before the cork bobbed!

. . .

I will pull this rope and stop this train! I cannot let all the fun escape in consideration for being thrown bodily from the train by the conductor. And, come to think of it, he could not do it. I am here, myself. The conductor is baldheaded. Shall a baldheaded man eject me? Nay, verily. But he can get the brakesman to help him and the porter beside; and my ticket is paid for and only good for this train. I would not mind being put off if it took three men to do it and be put off in the midst of this June greenery and blossoming, but cannot afford to lose my ticket. I will not pull the cord now. Thus ever do our petty economies rob life of its freedom and spontaneity. I am born too late. The pocketbook controls me and derides me. I am the serf of the nickel. Unafraid am I of porter and brakesman and conductor. Three men might put me off, but the fracas would be interesting and I would be no spectator. Yes, I have a mind to pull the bell rope and invite the scrap. But the nickel subdues me. I must not have this ticket canceled. And so I do not see the cork bob. This is at once the irony and

tyranny of cash. The complaisant nickel hobbles a man as if he were a horse.

Recent rains have poured the ditches of the roadside full. If it were only night a thousand frog serenades would fill the air. I wish it were night. 'Tis worth being auditor when a frog holds the guitar and tunes it to the muscles of his throat.

. . .

The clouds are indolent and far aloft. The wind is a ground wind and tosses the wheat fields and the lush green and the every wild flower into a perfect highland fling; but the sky winds are asleep and the clouds are at rest. They are mainly formless—unshapen like a haze. They are moody clouds through which the sun shines in a smileless way. The sky is restful; so is the sunlight. No glare is on the outlook. You could scarcely accumulate a freckle if you went fishing. A sleepy sky but never a bit of a sleepy day. The day is wide awake. The flowers and woods and the grass are all mad with joy.

The wind is wide awake; the June wonder is wide awake; clouds are fast asleep. En route through paradise! "O paradise, O paradise, who doth not long for thee?"

VII

A MADRIGAL OF THE NIGHT

THERE had been long and hungry drought. Rain had come by promise, rather than fulfillment, the skies clouding up with furious haste which promised bounteous downpour and the promise proving a Falstaffian veracity. No rain, just drought and the withered corn forcing itself toward withered tasseling. The afternoon had furnished its riot of promissory rain and had, as in a spirit of repentance, supplied a few drops, just enough to give the ground the blessed smell which intoxicates lovers of the country ways.

And I landed at a station where I had not been before and cannot say I care to be again, save as there was night there and silence and the dome of the sky. I was waiting to be carted across lots to a town on a neighboring railroad. I was not in haste. I was not worried. I was alone and in the gathering night; and the clouds hung in solace of unfulfilled benediction. I walked up and down the little tract of ground allotted me by the waiting for the cart and the carting. The gloaming was sweet with the dust-breath subdued and sweetened by the rain. Not a voice of any living thing was abroad in

the night save the happy sound of youth laughter where a pack of boy-men had congregated in the little telegraph office to talk a spell; and the guffaws of boy laughter with boys came shouting out of the little dim-lit windows like a gale of music to me, for what has more blessing than the laughter of the happy hearts; of happy folks whom God has blessed with the holy gift of laughter?

Happy human voices never intrude on any melody this world has in waiting for such as love its abundant tunefulness.

So the voices wafted from the little dim station; and, besides, the wind was whist, and the skies drew closer and more friendly, and I waited for the sound of horses' hoofs pounding an age-long rune in the dark. Stillness there, and nothing more. The breath of the vanished rain and the fickle promise of clouds which had been torn into windows through which stars gleamed with their lights, and I, a traveler from everywhere intent on everything which God has for distribution to those who wait at his table thinking to catch a crumb. The stars were far and high; and the clouds were near and stern; and I was walking through star-lamp light and drowsy-shadowed cloud and waiting. For the cart? Not altogether. Mostly for the wonder of the world. For am I not always waiting for the wonder of the world? That is who I am, if any foolish body cared to know. The waiter for the wonder

of the world. Never for a minute since first I guessed in earnest that this world was God's have I been other than knowing that if things belonged to God no moment could be free from the invasion of wonder.

So there, in the cleansing night with the compassion of the rain near at hand, I heard a meadow-lark give one lilt, one sudden gust of laughter in the dark. How my heart lifted to the wonder and the beauty of it! All my days of loving the meadow lark I had never heard a song from its bonny throat after dark. I had heard it toss a good-night kiss of song out as the sun was setting or lately set. But to hear him sing at night—that never. I wonder if it was dreaming. Maybe with head under sleepy wing, into its sunlit breast came a ripple as of swaying grasses or a rush as of summer wind and the sleepy bird thought it must be day. But I heard him sing! The song was no dream. I was wide awake, whatever the lark was. Just one blowing of its silver flute, one dream flung into the sky among the stars unaccustomed to its song—that was it and that was all. I waited long for one more wistful spread of song-wing in the dark but in vain. That voice once; and then that voice no more. It was dreaming?

Or perchance it was a bird on its nest packed full of feeble little folks who twittered a fear in the darkness and the song was meant to allay bird-fears, "night-fears," of birdie folk not yet

accustomed to our dark. What a sweet comfort that voice of song should have been to little fearful nestlings! Cheer would have caressed them into quiet after that. Like a mother soothing her little bird at night when in the dark, the little lad or lassie would wail out in sudden fear to be caressed into an unspeakable calm and quiet by a mother lullaby. "Hush, my dear. Lie still and slumber. Holy angels guard thy bed"; and for such a soothing song a baby might be glad enough to stumble into painful wakefulness. I, a man grown and coming toward life's yellow leaf, would have a hundred thousand heartaches if I might just be soothed by such a swift and dear compassion as my mother's lullaby. The night song of the lark, was a mother lullaby? Maybe. We cannot tell.

It may have been a bird in love and thought itself singing to its lady in the morning when the day was young. Maybe the raindrops on its nest and on its yellow breast, it took for dew and so sang out one swift and tuneful word —"Morning."

But whatever caused the song, I, a man of the longing heart, heard it and stored it away in the shadow spaces of my heart, where dwell the innumerable company of memories sweet as dawn and lovely as blooming flax swayed in the noon-time wind.

VIII

A SURPRISE OF THE DESERT

I WAS in the desert and alone. I had taken a faint trail outward, I knew not where nor cared. And then that trail had vanished, but not the desert. The hot desert was everywhere. It stretched its lazy length on and on. How the desert which seems so otiose can travel unweariedly so very far is beyond a body's capacity to understand, but certain it is the desert is very far-going. Its indolence does not keep it at home. It travels far and many whithers.

I never murmur at the desert. Truth to say, I love it and laugh out loud on its wide, witless uncompanioned stretches. It is the lungs of a continent. A continent without a desert would be a disqualified continent. "Clean-breathed as the desert"—no word can be added to that. The desert is brewing clean air for a continent to breathe. What a glorious vocation! And I am pilgrim on this same desert and, what is more, a pilgrim with a song.

The day burnt hot and the desert path was nigh molten; but the desert air was an intoxication. I walked as in a dream, a happy albeit a sweaty dream. The Sahara and I had become

friends. The desert and I—alone. Not a habitation, not an inhabitant, not a wandering sheep nor the sign by track or visibility of any cattle herd, just a tawny desert from which at intervals grew black, stunted pines, things meant for the sky but which had not arrived at their destination nor could ever arrive. The desert kept rocks against its hot breast to bungle at making a little shadow. No touch of verdure anywhere. Russian thistles which had been green once were now dried into perpetual anger and sought to nip you like an angry cur. Just desert. And to the far off, yet friendly mountains, is there nothing at bloom? Why no, certainly not. There was nothing to bloom. How shall dead plants burst into flower? How shall the sterile desert bloom? "The wilderness and the solitary place—shall blossom" maybe, but not this "wilderness and solitary place." So am I wanderer, glorious vagabond of the desert and with compass lost. All silent. Not a bird chirp, not a chipmunk's cracked laughter, not a desert hawk flinging temporary shadow on the burning spaciousness. Just a desert and a man afoot—and very glad and with a heart at song, wild song, a lover of the ruthless desert, a dreamer wandering where God had often wandered before.

So I slouched along. Nothing hurried. Delaying, dallying, only dallying, enjoying, wandering heart-deep into leagues high of desert blue

of sky, lounging along tawny footpaths where no foot fall was, wandering amidst perpetuated drought where the clouds all but always shammed rain and where rains were fenced out by incredible hedges of eternal mountains, a leisurer on the desert where "manyana" seized his feet and his dreams and the lotus lily grew on Niles of blistering sand and he had inhaled its nepenthe. A desert and the domed sky and the haughty mountains, aristocrats of the sky, at far removes and the smoking wastes of the unwaterable plains, and one man who loved it all and craved it all and was wistful in it, and whose soul, more than half ashamed, sometimes whispered, "Let us never go hence."

But we shall find no posy this day. Nature will accord us no nosegay of the desert. We shall wear the splendor of the sky for a purple cloak and inhale the sage brush perfume for our mignonette. We need no posy. We have our share and more. Would a body on the wide and rippling sea murmur because he could not gather roses there? I think not. But this is God's sea. His inland sea, God's sea of sand—all shore—where sands answer to the coming and the going of the winds.

So am I calm and indolently glad and strangely and infinitely refreshed by this desert.

What shall be said for a man who knows no more than to enjoy everything? Everything? We must stand him on the dunce's stool and bid

him wear the dunce's cap. But, coming to think on it, to such dunces the stool and cap would be a supererogation. Let us economize on dunce caps. Let us grow eager in the desert nor cogitate on follies or wisdoms. There is time enough for that when the desert is faint as a daydawn seen in childhood. And the day was here and the desert wanderings and the curling heat: and the dunce was abroad and no one near to hector him. So mote be it.

An arroyo came to a sudden, abrupt head, blunt like the prow of an ocean freighter. It was cut out of the desert as by an ax, hacked down ruthlessly and with scant economy; for what is land worth to nature, desert land in particular? and a gash was made beyond the healing. Just a dull adobe wall built for no reason, staying for no reason, reasonless as the rest of the desert.

And at the verge where the arroyo took its inartistic and unnecessary start, within a three inches space of the leap off, a bunch of purple aster stood in radiant flower! Had I found a wild rose growing mid-sea, I think I had not been whipped into wider surprise. A purple aster always makes me wonder. I see them, see them and want to see them still. Were I administering the out-of-doors, I would make the purple asters perennials. I should wish God might choose to grow them for an amaranth in his heaven for our earthly immortelle. The blue

of the sky and the wonder of moonlight commingled, that is the purple aster.

Here in the desert's heart and at the crude arroyo's brink where nothing was growing nor any green thing gave hint of blossoming, this purple aster trimmed its lovely lamps like love lights at a casement. What cared this flower though the brink of doom was at hand or that the desert was at burning noon? It was sweetly careless of all this. It was in the bliss of self-realization. It was at its sunrise, what cared it whose day was hot and sultry as furnace breath?

Not an imperfectly shaped flower in all the cluster. I sat close and looked the blossom straight in the face. But it had bloomed for God to see. I was an intruder in its room. And it watched on, looking only at God.

And I left it. Did I pluck one flower? Nay, friend, I am no vandal. I am a man. Where it grew, I left it growing, its purple stars all risen and shining. I am a wanderer in the desert: it is dweller in the desert but scarcely of it.

The purple mountains lifted rank on rank afar and noble as a noble dream: and the purple flowers with watching through many days and the remote purple mountains had learned their splendor by heart? Who knows?

I see the solemn purple mountains over the drowsy desert now, the light unspeakable of the sands and skies now, and the tiny clustering purple asters, growing in the desert now.

IX

I HEARD A BLUE BIRD

THE time is midwinter: the place is Quaylecliff. A deeper snow blanketed the ground than had been known in many years. The snows lay knee-deep on the level and were drifted gloriously. Far as the eye can compass, the landscape is uninterrupted whiteness, and under the sun is white and glistening as an angel's apparel. On the south side of the house and barn, though the sun shines his best without a veil of cloud to temper his radiancy, not a show of thaw is on the ground nor a drip of icicle on the eves. It is bitter cold. The test thermometer registers eighteen below, which is weather for Kansas. On the hill where we are cooking our midday meal, our wood fire does not thaw the snow on the ends of the burning logs. Heat seems not to radiate. Winter is holding forth. This would be dignified cold anywhere. Ears are an impertinence in this frigidity. They are too numerous for one thing, and then they will stick out, and the frost makes merry with them. A nose is bad enough, but there is but one of him. "Wintry" is what the neighbors remark as they pass each other wrapped like Icelanders.

My friend and I are camping out, as our custom is, without regard for weather. We do not furnish weather but applaud it of whatsoever sort it is. Rain, shine, summer, winter, fall, spring, night, day, nipping frost, perfervid heat —none of these things move us. We are impervious to climate, or possibly it were better to say we are encorers of climates. All weather pleases us. We are humble folk like the conies, and all we ever have the intrepidity to demand is some kind of weather. This demand appears to us as rational and religious. And after happy years weathering it we report that God has always given us weather. Some are critical of the climatic conditions: they dictate terms to the elements. To us two men who are humble belongers to the proletariat of mankind, that seems preposterous. To Emerson's "Give me health and a day and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous," we vagabonds of the fields add "Weather," so that the wealth we pray for is, "Health and a day and some weather." And we always get some weather. In the winter the light is briefer; in summer, longer, but darkness ekes out the light one way or another, so we always get a day; and we always get "a weather." What odds whether the weather be dark or light, cold or hot, full of song of birds or trumpeted full of angry voices of warring winds? That is not our concern. The concert that nature furnishes, seeing it is gratis,

we cannot in common good manners prescribe, since we listen to it and applaud and give a rugged encore. We have spent night and day with rain pouring on us and even sousing on us, with every thread of garment qualified for a clothes wringer; we have been out in scorching Julys in this open when you could have set fire to this visible part of the open by scratching a match against the sandal of nature. But all seasons and degrees of humidity or heat please us. We absolve the weather and pick no quarrel. We have our share; and a day has ever been ours to riot in and bless God for at the falling of the shadows or the waking from the dark. Of weather we have had some at every turn of our road and of health have had enough so that we were in general nearer well than sick so that to the neighborly colloquialism, "How are you to-day?" we could reply with alacrity, "Well, thank you and the Lord." Quarreling with the weather we think to be unjustifiable loquacity. The weather does not mind. It has its mind made up and refuses to change and cannot be bullied, so where is the use? What philosophers we two be, though I will exonerate us from being so by intention! We are simply children of the sun, and like the open, where the day is born in purple splendor and where the day sails high across a heaven it loves and owns. Fussing at weather accentuates its peculiarity, whatever that may be. Hot weather is never cooled off by

fussing, but, rather, heated thereby. Whether fanning creates more heat in me than it invites coolness out of me is a proposition on which I am still agnostic. Yet am I of a confident mind that drubbing the weather is retroactive. It kicks back "awful." Cold days were never warmed by an inhabitant getting mad. That kind of heat does not modify the temperature. Better slap your hands or cavort with your feet.

So winter at its wildest bids this two of us out to my hill to luxuriate in its winter passion.

The cornfield tented over with the shocks of corn, as you might discern in the picture taken with freezing fingers on this identical winter day, has never a rabbit track on it, nor a fussy toddling of a field mouse. Across it has passed the scythe of the icy wind and cut everything to a common level. The snow is rioting in every breath the wind draws. The storm is bonny. Every nose is an inconvenience, for the weather tweaks it in a jocular way which, while neighborly, is a little *too* familiar. Where the rabbits are is a mystery, but they are not around here. I have played circuit rider going around this farm from Dan to Beersheba and never a rabbit nor a rabbit track. Maybe they have been drinking nepenthe, as Mr. Poe advised, or maybe they have taken to hibernation, mistaking this for arctic climate. A crow occasionally plunges through the sky intent on going somewhere or dives down to make free with a corn shock he

did not build nor grow. Chickadees chic and dee-dee alertly but only a few of them. The fact is that we two campers-out are about the only inhabitants of this hill. Certainly we are the only ones that clearly enjoy it. And we do. We are in our element.

We have seized the highest hill hereabouts and are industriously building our camp fire. The wind is high and is plainly carousing. The trees on my hill-crest are filled with all savage minstrelsy. Snow leaps into the sky in aerial gymnastics. The boughs bend and rejoice in the riot of which they find themselves a part. In a word, we are enshrined in music. The glee is on us as on the woods; and the storm has found in us congenial spirits. And what we living things lack in numbers we make up in ruddy joy. We swing the ax, we drag or pack the fallen trees, we pile the logs on the wind-swept hill, and we are getting hungry, and the steak is frozen which we brought for cooking. We scratch the match: we see the slow blaze scatter and ignite the dead twigs, the bits of bark, the wild locust thorns till the smoke surges in our faces and blinds our eyes; and the fun of the camp fire has begun. We shall be smoked bacon in due time but we shall be cured, which is more than can be said of many. When isn't a camp fire a comfort and a joy for all those who care for the pristine pleasures of the field? But when cold weather is daggering about to hit the marrow

in the bones, when the camp is where the wild roses bloomed in June, and the wild birds build their nests singing, and on spring nights the frog note fills the lingering starlight with weird call, testimonial of creature gladness, and in August heats the locust strikes his one harp-string with a strum which vibrates as if August heat had oozed into a voice, and here where my wild crab fills at the blooming time all this hill-top air with a divine perfume, here a camp fire is a poem. But this is January and not April nor August nor June nor May.

We have a straw sack at our back built for fracases like this. It smells good; and the fire sends puffs of genial smoke its way as with friendly intent to warm these aged wheat stalks. And the stack feels good. The north wind plunges at it as in pure pugnacity or as if it were a besieged fortress. Boom, boom, rouse the winds. Plainly, spring will never reach this winter-conquered hill. Snows spurt into the sky in swaying spirals, and grow jocund with the wind. New forms of drifts are created every hour. Snow buntings should be here. This is their weather. They are not. No bird is here now. The hill is solitary of every living thing but ourselves. The wood smoke swirls and plunges every whither as if loath to leave the fire. Our eyes smart with the smoke but love it none the less. Shouts of the wind grow uproarious like Indian raiders, when beyond all imagining and

contradictory of all nature-logic, swift and sweet on the winter air sounds out "Ber-mu-da! Ber-mu-da!"

And two men at home in the storm, yell like Comanches in frenzy, "A bluebird!" Truly a bluebird? Then doubting our ears, we listened as in a dream and again, "Ber-mu-da, Ber-mu-da, Ber-mu-da." And then three pilgrims of the spring, bluebirds ignoring the storm and the rage of the winter, came near our campfire and spake each to the other "Ber-mu-da" and passed on a voice of music and of violets.

And to us it was spring.

I think that they were fooled bluebirds, and to all reason fool bluebirds; but their minstrelsy had tuned the lute anew. It was no longer winter on that hill, and the white earth was no longer white with snow but with wind-flowers pranking with the merry winds. Seasons had changed places in a moment only because we heard a bluebird.

It was spring!

X

THE FUN OF MAKING GARDEN

SOME think making garden, work. They do err, not knowing the truth. It is fun. A little sweat is becomingly mingled with the function, but is not so much the sweat of toil as it is the sweat of spring fever, the beginnings of the session of the sun. And sweat is very healthy and very much needed. To take the collar off and tie a handkerchief about the neck and seize with becoming violence the south end of a hoe gives such an impression of importance that it is worth all it costs in perspiration to give yourself such a wholesome exhibit of yourself as a man of real worth and affairs.

Beside, gardening is an antique occupation. More antique than any furniture on display at any antique store. This should ingratiate gardening with those artistic souls who dote on the antique and remote. Adam was a gardener, we read, and the rendering of the text is doubtless accurate. While Adam hoed, Eve stood by and bossed. And if authority be demanded for such an assertion, seeing nothing of the sort is named in the text, the easy and accurate reply is that to have said such a thing would have

been a piece of persiflage, a work of supererogation; for does not everybody know what a woman does when her spouse is making garden? She stands by and bosses. There is pathos in this suggestion, but truth cannot be denied because it is pathetic. So, for reasons of its antique and therefore classic character as well as for its suggestion of industry and a slight suggestion of vegetables, making garden should be set down as an occupation to be set store by.

Have a garden. If you cannot have one on the ground, have a roof garden. They do not so well claim the fidelity of effort as those on the ground, but have a garden anywhere. Putter around; look important. Think on that worthy vender of truisms who remarked on the market value of the man who made a couple of blades of grass grow so that there would be two green things, the man and the grass. What a flood of sage sayings sweat out of a man when he is making garden! How genius seems necessary to his dust!

If the man have gardened before, then he has all that hilarious excitement which necessarily comes to a man looking for the rake and the hoe and the spade. They are where he put them *not* last year. His wife will revile him and resuscitate the unpardonable incident of Job's wife who talked back to her husband. She will say with a smile which has no sunlight in it, "Dearie, you will presumably find the garden

implements where you put them last year. Of course you know where that is." Now, a thing or two of that kind turns common gardening into a means of grace; for he who being a man, master of his own house (as it were) and can command himself and keep calm while such intimations refresh the air, may calmly survey himself in the glass when he has washed the honest grime of honest toil in an honest gardening effort, and seeing his own anatomy, say, "You are a good man, a very good man," and such a conclusion is very heartening to any man I have ever met.

Some good men are deterred from gardening because there is an element of uncertainty in it. They think so many contingencies arise about the progress of events in the nurture of vegetables. So many things happen whether the vegetables happen or not. This is true but should deter no valorous man from the endeavor. There are things happen. Bugs, caterpillars, drought, frost, incidentals, accidentals, insagacity of seeds, misdirection of effort, hoeing up the things you planted, not being acquainted with the real look of the thing you designed to grow, and saddest, the gardener in his pursuit of vegetation which intrudes on his garden purlieus (to wit, weeds), setting his pedal extremities on the vegetable in process, and many such things. These are all likelihoods in gardening. But would a brawny man retire from effort because of the uncertainty

of conditions? Is not life full of accidentals like certain music? Shall we not show ourselves more the master of fate to fool with the garden irrespective of what happens to the garden? Shall we ask to have the garden success insured ere we tackle the garden job? Be it far from us who are writ down "men" in the census. We must be up and doing, however many things are up and doing at the same time.

"What would you do with your neighbor's chickens?" was the frivolous question once thrust at me by a brother who was indolent, and did not wish to walk the sweaty ways of gardening; for be it known that all the indolent dodge gardening. That is not their craft. Tom Sawyer junior nor Tom Sawyer senior ever wanted to garden for a living. The indolent have many subterfuges whereby to avoid the attrition of the hoe handle on the naked hand, which attrition is bound to ultimate in a blister. No blister, no gardening. Settle to that. That is the axiom of good gardening. You cannot give a garden absent treatment nor can you give a hoe absent treatment. A hoe is a neighborly implement and wants companionship. It is not select. Most anybody will do; but it wants somebody. Solitude has no charms for the breast of the hoe. To garden you must be in the garden and grip the hoe and make certain passes with it, which as so much mesmeric treatment pleases both garden and hoe, which will in the ordinary course

of Providence ultimate in blisters. Blisters are the plural of blister, a grammatical and mathematical discrimination worthy of consideration and remembrance. Be callous to these observations and you may never be a full member in the illustrious order of Gardeners of which Adam is the somewhat damaged high muck-a-muck.

The lazy are adepts in the art of excuse. The saying of the wise man was that the prudent man seeth the danger and hideth himself. The aphorism of the indolent man is "The lazy man seeth the work and maketh an excuse." He findeth cause of absence. He conjureth up reasons why certain lines of effort will in the nature of the case be futile and, so, an unproductive toil.

Chickens, forsooth! Shall a few chickens defeat a man of assured industry? Put it this way, Shall the man who pays the rent on his house abdicate headship thereof to a few chickens? Is he chicken hearted? Then are there two chickens, he and the other one. Your neighbor's chickens! what a dull man a lazy man is. His doctrine stops not at his hands, but slowly—always slowly; the lazy man never does anything other than slowly, "Go slow," being his motto —slowly lets his brain move with many a rest and so he seldom getteth at the truth. He is somewhere behind the facts, somewhere a long way behind them. Shall a gardener, successor of Adam I, fear a few chickens, and their itching ways offer impediment to a real gardener? But

the slow brother given to laziness still reiterateth his fumbled remark, "Chickens, my neighbor's chickens—what shall I do with them?" There he standeth on one leg like a reflective chicken instead of scratching with both feet like an unsuperannuated chicken. To me who am a minister, the question seems frivolous. What do with the neighbor's chickens? Why, eat them. What but a dull brain would find a neighbor's chicken an impediment to gardening? Chickens facilitate gardening. They strengthen the gardener, and so help the gardenee! What is in the garden may safely be included as a part of the garden and as much planted as the lettuce or onions! And what is planted in the garden is the evident property of the gardener.

And if this logic seem to you specious, you not being adept in the logic of gardening, look at your neighbor's chickens in your garden in another light. They are intruders. Now, whatever intrudes on a garden is a weed, and a weed, as even a not lazy gardener knows, is to be hoed up. The chicken of your neighbor is a weed, therefore by this irresistible logic, is to be hoed up. When a chicken is hoed up he will return no more. That will end the chicken.

Hence he or she, according to the crow or cackle, is not to be set down as an impediment but simply as a weedy incident to be overcome with the hoe.

Or if you care to do so, take another view of your neighbor's chicken. It is a critter, and

critters are to be tabooed in a garden. They divest it of fertility. The chicken is to be looked on in the nature of a potato bug. The potato and the bug cannot thrive simultaneously, hence all expert gardeners promptly kill the potato bug and not the potato. If the bug were not taught that it was mortal, the potato would succumb to mortality. We kill the bug in the interest of the potato, for gardening is not the fine art of raising bugs: it is the fine art of raising potatoes and such like edibles. To fail to kill the bug is treason to the potato: and gardeners must not be traitors, hence killing the bug is right and our bounden duty. By this irrefutable logic the neighbor's chicken is a bug and must be killed. So it will happen that the chicken will not trouble for long. He must be eliminated in the interest of the garden sass which may be said to own the garden.

Now, by all these logical paths we are led to the same conclusion, to the elimination, i. e., the hoeing down of the neighbor's chicken. He is a weed, a bug, a hostile, and to undo him is due him and due the garden. A severely logical faculty is thus seen to be a fine gardener asset. This may account for my own success in this field of learning.

A certain learned journal once upon a time was stimulated by my vaticinations on gardening to enter editorial demurrer. It was well done. That is, what was done, was as well done as a poor thing could be. The point made by the

editor, if it might be dignified as a point, was that my contention that it was not the gardener's business to produce, but to go through the motions which should end in production was erroneous. The writer averred that it was better to have a garden produce, that it was more fun to grow things than to grow at them. An array of vegetables was set in view with the intent to incite the observer to cupidity. I cared for no such utilitarian logic. It scathed me not. I stood obdurate. I am for the art of the thing. To stand stolidly by and insist on a garden raising vegetables and hollyhocks seems to me the essence of selfishness. Where is the altruistic spirit if that be the *summum bonum* of gardening? Where is the poetry of the thing gone? Do we not walk by faith? and is faith not its own reward? I protest, this editor was a son of Tubal Cain who wanted to see sparks fly whenever he hit an anvil. A body's hunger will be more readily appeased by a potato which has grown in the garden than by one which has not grown. That is granted. But are we not told that the hungry are blessed? I certainly have read that remark somewhere, and how shall we be hungry and get the beatitude personally applied if we raise the potato and eat it? Now, that is logic, hoe-handle logic. It would dig up any editor who attempted to attack this writer on the art of gardening. We will not listen to editorial expectorations like this. We hold to the garden and its spirit of

altruistic effort and poetical interpretation. A punkin is not the end of the punkin vine. It is the aftermath of the punkin flower. You cannot make punkin pie of the punkin bloom, but neither can you wear the punkin for a button-hole bouquet. So the æsthete in us champions the blossom while the dull instinctive utilitarian and animal insists on the pie. I stand by the flowering of the punkin vine rather than the pie-ing of the same vine. Now, what any punkin head will decide on this business will depend on the punkinity of his head. I cannot loiter with him longer. The garden calleth and the hoe waiteth my coming. Hence, I bid the editor a scathing adieu and proceed to tickle the garden with the hoe.

Then, envy often puts forth its ill-odored flower when the incapables look at us capables' garden. I have had such experiences repeatedly —and attribute them to the weakness of human nature. They are sign of its extreme frailty. I condone it but cannot approve it. For instance, after I had sweat and moiled and toiled many long, intellectual hours over a garden which produced less or more according to how much it yielded, an envious neighbor sent me this poem,

> It was the busy hour of four,
> When from a city hardware store,
> Emerged a gentleman who bore
> 1 hoe,
> 1 spade,
> 1 wheelbarrow.

From thence our hero promptly went
Into a seed establishment.
And for these things his money spent:
1 peck of bulbs,
1 job lot of shrubs,
1 quart of assorted seeds.

He has a garden under way,
And if he's fairly lucky, say,
He'll have, about the last of May,
1 squash vine,
1 egg plant,
1 radish.

—(*Washington Herald.*)

The poem is not inserted here as a vegetable to be cultivated but as a weed to be rooted up. I now proceed to uproot it. This poem (so called) was sent me by the wife of my preacher. I read it with mingled anger and pity. I then 'phoned the minister who was married to this woman and told him that from that moment on, he might know that I had ceased to be a contributing member of his church. This, of course, interested the minister; and he asked me what he had done to result in such financial loss to him. I replied in a sturdy tone, at the end of the 'phone, that it was not a "he" which had hurt my feelings, but a "she." He regretted exceedingly that such an occurrence had cut off my weekly stipend from his embarrassed financial exchequer. What "she" could have invaded the sacred privacy of my feelings, he inquired, and I replied in a stentorian voice that *his* "she" had done this thing.

He was abashed. I did not wonder that he should be. I meant he should be. I had, so to speak, thrown a bombshell into his camp. He needed money. What preacher was there ever anywhere who did not? He, in a quavering voice, quavering with intense emotion, said, "Can I see you about this matter before it goes further?"

"No," I shouted, "it has already gone further." This caused him to scratch his head. He lingered at the 'phone. I cried, "Ring off!" but he implored, "Ring not off; give me a moment to think." I said, "You cannot do that in a moment. It takes you a long time to think. Ring off." Then I read him the poem and stated in icy tones that I could be oblivious in a measure to all save the last stanza or verse, I cared not which he called it, but those audacious words, "I radish." I could not excuse that sentiment. It was unpardonable; would he hang up the receiver? Our relations which had always been so pleasant and on which I doted were now *non est*. I used that word as a settler. He took it so. And kept on talking. Now, this same minister by some means not known to me had acquired an apple orchard. He grew apples on his bushes he said. He asked if apples would in any measure medicine my lacerated feelings? I replied that I could not reply. Not knowing, I could not say. He spoke feelingly to the effect that he would try. That, of course, was not my

matter; and so I hung up the receiver. He has brought many apples since. My feelings have been helped some. They may be healed in time; but it takes a good deal to make a true gardener get over a slur on his profession. 1 radish, forsooth! But we good men must expect tribulations in this garden of a world. All Apples help some.

What to do with the weeds has been asked. I cannot attempt to answer all frivolous objections offered to this Adamic trade we boast of, but a word at intervals may be helpful. Weeds may be burned or thrown over the fence or left growing. The last method is the most immethodical and unindustrious but scarcely the most helpful to the garden. You sweat less by weeding the garden by absent treatment but the vegetables vegetate less. All depends on your attitude toward the vegetables. To burn the weeds reduces them to an ideal state of incineration and has a tendency to stifle their taking root again that same season. Throwing them over the fence stimulates the scattering of the seed in your neighbor's garden and has, of course, an altruistic effect in a measure. Your neighbor, if he does not get mad and remark, has had a needed lesson in self-restraint. But it often happens that your neighbor does not have himself under proper control. If he has not, the beneficent effect of throwing weeds over the fence is somewhat limited. One must judge for

himself. I do. Independency of spirit should grow in every garden, whether the garden stuff grows or not.

Now if a chicken—note I return to the chicken, but that is because he returns to the garden and has to be dealt with. He is a difficulty: and difficulties must be faced by the brave. Now, if you hoed up a chicken, he is a weed and can be thrown over the fence. But it has been shown that that is not conducive to neighborliness. Hence let us give over thought of that method of dealing with this chicken weed. The next plan is to burn him, which I interpret as frying him. It prevents cold storage. Depend upon it, that this method frankly and steadily pursued will change your neighbor's chickens from a gardening impediment into a facilitation of the gardening process.

Thus will the hoeing up of the chickens become a spring picnic of hoeing.

You have to pursue this chicken weed. It is like running down a tumble weed, which is positively exhilarating. Neighbors may think you are running a race, whereas you are humbly hoeing a chicken down or up. I know not which adverb to use. Both will do. Agility is educated in hoeing up chickens, which comes from no other weed. Now, this weed once down or up, the burning, otherwise frying, begins. I think that the best way yet discovered to deal with this particular weed. It ends the weed and does

so with real pleasure. These methods undoubtedly rid the neighborhood of pin feathers and broilers but the neighbors must look to that. We garden. They run a hen roost; but our Christian duty is to look after our craft, and if in the sturdy industry of hoeing the garden and freeing it of weeds, one can incidentally have spring chickens on which to break one's fast, so much the better. In a word, nothing discourages a true gardener. He turns impediments into accelerations and incentives. Gardening must be encouraged.

It is a prime blunder in gardening to think the business of gardening and the gardener is to raise vegetables. What a dull utilitarian a gardener would be who would so diagnose the gardener's task. Nay, verily. The main business to be accomplished in gardening is to make the effort. It is not a gardener's business to produce vegetables. It is his business to go through those motions which wisely directed do sometimes ultimate in vegetables. That places gardening among the fine arts as also in the heroic occupations, such as discovery and hunting lions. There is the uncertainty in lion hunting as to whether you will consume the lion or the lion will consume you. This adds to the interest both of the lion and the man. Nothing is settled in this world prior to the event. There is a dash of wild courage, therefore, a rush of perturbations, a swing of wild enthusiasm when a man strikes hoe into the ground for the making

of a garden. How his toils will eventuate, whether in an onion or a disappointment, he knows not. He will know more when he is older. Let him hector the ground. Let him pound the clod. Let him lean over till his back aches and a liniment is in requisition. Let him listen to his wife as she leans menacingly from the window and advises him to plant radish seeds if he aspires to grow radishes. Let him hear the maid insist that he plant the onion sets bottoms down because if he does not they will not come up. Let him hear with nonchalance the jeers of his neighbors as they go by, or what is worse, refuse to go by but stand and volunteer advice. Let the gardener do these things and he has done all that Providence really requires in his showing himself a man and a gardener and a correct descendant of Adam, the father of all who handle the hoe, as Jubal was the father of all such as blow on the horn (their own horn). O, to be a gardener and to plant things, and be serene whether they come up or not! May the race of such increase.

The Truant Citizen

Oh, I don't want to plow,
  An' I never want to hoe;
Ruther be off yonder
  Where the honeysuckles grow,
Wadin' in the daisies
  Whiter than the snow,
All in a bright spring mornin'.

Oh, I don't want to sow
  An' I never want to reap;
Ruther be off yonder
  In the valleys green an' deep;
Wind that waves the blossoms
  Singin' me to sleep,
All in a bright spring mornin'.

Never made fer toilin'—
  Only made to be
Yonder where the river
  Is sayin' things to me;
Where the lily's tilted over
  By the gold weight of the bee,
All in a bright spring mornin'.

—*Atlanta Constitution.*

XI

THE MEADOW LARKS SINGING AND SILENT

THINGS are always happening. Nothing is at standstill where God is. I am sitting beside a noble river. When coming to this particular city I always secure rooms at a certain hotel for no reason save that it overlooks one of the rivers set apart in my book of days as of singular wonder. It is the roadway through which three great lakes are adventuring toward the ocean. A thousand miles away and more the sea awaits the coming of these waters; and the waters will not wait. They are ever at journey. Tireless under the noon or night, bridged by ice or spanned by the vast arch of blue which God hath set as a bow of promise, never disappearing nor waiting for the tragedy of stormy cloud, onward the river walks like an army bound for the front. Only silent, silent, silent—and sublime.

This morning the river has on it flotillas of ice. The winter is losing grip. The ice floe is hungry for the sea, and because the archipelagoes are on the river's breast the motion of the stream is strangely and strongly apparent. No stand-

still, no retardation, no ebb; only onward, seriously, serenely onward with a resolution which nothing can invade. This stately river's onward pictures without obscurity the no standstill in the world of God. Calm is a myth while we pitch our tents on a sphere which speeds along a roadway we dimly trace at the pace of a million miles the day and past. We are at journey. We are in haste. The whole wide, wise world refuses slumber. No opiate can put nature to sleep for long nor some of nature asleep for a minute. Somewhere the bird ever waketh and the sea is forever at climb of shore or resolution for the windy deep.

So, on one day in my home at the south porch of this land of ours, the sky was deep abundant blue. The sunshine was at flush of triumph. The world was wizarded over by the sunlight. And can anyone evade the fresh miracle of sunlight? Can a soul fall so dead asleep as not to answer to the outrush of the light where in transparent skies and near the south the sunshine has its way and even midwinter if the sun can break through the sullenness of cloud, the sunshine warms the heart and the window, blithe as the backtalk of the birds?

In this Oklahoma weather, if the sun has his chance, we who love the lure of the sunlight and court freckles can have a springtime holiday.

And this day was wild with light. The sun

seemed come to stay. He asserted his supremacy as an inference and never as an argument. The sun will not argue. You can never catch the sun in open lying any more than you could Jack Falstaff. The sun does things which deceive even the elect in matters of weather, and then when he backs down and disappears from his own dooryard and you would accuse him of playing with the truth, then you discover the sun had made no promises: we had inferred. But this day the inference was triumphant. The meadow larks and I knew a thing. And the meadow larks said what they knew. An empty block is just across the street from the house built for us, and there are apple trees, not a few upon it, and here, for what reasons I cannot name unless these wise birds know how full of love-wonder an apple tree at bloom always is, they cluster and clamor in their sweet staccato and more than any single place hereabouts the larks go skylarking. And to-day they are drunk with song. Their lyrics tumble over each other like hoydens. They scarcely intermit a moment. They must sing, and they do without a hesitant mood. I have learned to distrust my own sagacity; it has so often failed me. I know when not to affect wisdom. But I confess to finding it next door to the impossible to discount the knowledge of the birds. They are so sure themselves. They never have a tentative note in their voice. They are categorical. They are

possessors of the "Yea, verily," and when they bewilder the sunlight with their happy laughter and make you think that in them sunlight is come to song or in meadow larks songs are come to sunshine, who could be sophist and remain dubitant?

Spring has come to stay. We shall be visited by no more wild and winter weather. Hail to the gentle spring!

The next morning I awake and the wild wind has awakened before me. The curtain is lifted in a jiffy. The whirl of a snow storm fills the sky. I cannot see across the block adjacent. The meadow with the orchard where yesterday the larks were rioting with song is this day rioted over with a stormy wind. The lustihood of the storm is contagious. I feel the fury in my blood. Where is spring? How many æons ago did it vanish? Will it ever come again? Winter has come with jubilance to stay. No meadow lark sings to-day. No meadow lark is anywhere in sight. They are ashamed of their prognostications, maybe. Where are they, anyhow? But 'tis bootless to inquire. It is like asking where is Dr. Cook. Silence is the only answer. How the wind and the snow boil! The world is storm swept. This is no half-hearted, palsied effort of decrepit winter to let on he is in his frosty prime. All the day that storm raged with uninterrupted fury. Fury was the word. No other would name the day. Spirals of snow

ran far up into the clouds and looked like inverted water spouts grown frosty. There was snow on the ground in plenty, but the mark of the day was that the brawling wind coveted the snow for the angry sky and would not let the ground retain the snow fall but would scoop it up and fling it in vast and windy handfuls back into the sky spaces whence it came. It made a man proud who loves the wind to see the unchallenged supremacy the gale had. What a high day it was for such as love the rampant fury of the unleashed winds. But where are the larks? They know. I do not. To-morrow likely enough they will be as cocksure as they were yesterday.

Birds have no shame about lying. They are so busy singing. Are singers mendacious? What heresy is this to raise so unmusical a question! But the meadow larks will not apologize nor will they explain. I am confident of that. I know them. Their truthfulness is in a backslidden state. How the storm masters us all! The cars run by fits. The starts are there too; but the fits are the main matter of observation. Spring has gone off on a swift and compulsory journey. And we are not ill content. Winter is good. Let it stay a spell. Its anger is not obnoxious but palatable. The rage of the day-long, from dawn to dark, the skeins of snow, the blinding drift, the stagger of strong men before the wind, the drench of the whole firma-

ment with the hurricane of snows, spirals of aspiration climbing the heavens as to defeat old gravitation, who could be unresponsive to such demonstrations, much less angry with them!

Yesterday was springtime, sweet of breath and full of song; to-day is winter—trumpet-voiced and far from calm. And both are days of God and he is on them both and in them both.

And for them both I give Him thanks from a full heart.

XII

UNDER THE TENT OF THE WILD CRAB BLOSSOMING

BETWEEN trains, a long, indolent, delicious June daylight. Think on that, you who love life and the bobolink's song. So having stowed my grips at the station, I hied me away. But as for that, when do I not hie me unto the fields if a thousandth part of a chance offer? My hieing apparatus is good and in perpetual repair. We shall not be staying in this out-of-doors world always, and we must sprawl down on the bank of its streams and drink the running water the most we may. To-morrow we may not be here, and the Master of it all may ask us for a report on the journey we have taken and we shall not wish to be abashed and silent. So till dusk darkens into darkness and the widest-awake bird is fast asleep on its sleepy bough, I shall be free. Nobody knows I am here and nobody cares. And it is winsome June a-calling and it is I a-coming to the call.

. . .

"Give me health and a day and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous," said our transcendental friend Emerson; and he is right sometimes. He is right this time if he meant this June day; for I have health (and I give

God thanks therefor) and this day, so now must I proceed to make the pomp of emperors ridiculous. If Emerson could, why not I? I too have transcendental moments—times when I walk the sky like the winged things.

So I forage. That is the preamble of a day in the sunlight and shade. Hunger and good time are not true friends. A day of wonder, to have its way with you, must be let alone. The gnawings of hunger, or even the solicitations of hunger, are not helpers. They distract the mind. They detract from the wonder overarching all. I can read "The Ode to Immortality" better when I am unhungry. Hunger attracts attention to itself. So, not as hailing from Sybaris, do I, one of God's common people, go foraging ere I go Juning up and down the world. I am a simple son of the soil and the sun and know that a bit of bacon cooked at the end of a stick over a sweetly smelling fire of last year's leaves and many a year's branches will help the sky and the wind and the swaying shadows to have their say with the bacon-ee. In eating "under the greenwood tree" (as says Shakespeare), and "far from the madding crowd" (as says Gray in the "Elegy"), I shall not be pampering the flesh but liberating the spirit. I shall be drying the gadfly's wings, so to say, so that he may make rainbows above some drowsy brook.

. . .

The foraging is accomplished. Lest the irreligious misapprehend (as the manner of the wicked is) and suppose that foraging means purloining, I will proclaim that such edibles as are foraged for by me are paid for in good cash. Honesty is the right policy when a body goes forth to emperor it over a day because the conscience must be in the sunlight lest the eyes see no vistas and the ears hear no song.

So, away, away, blithe heart. The day is thine! Enjoy this day. *Carpe diem*, though we shall not need Horace or the odors of his Alban farm to help us. The bobolink is here and puts Horace to discomfit and silence.

For on this day I first heard the bobolink. This may seem untraveled; but is not truth often untraveled? Yet even so it was. My rearing had been where no bobolink lifted his voice nor gave us the courtesy of his presence. And here on this June day in Wisconsin I was totally unaware the bobolink was within a sky's width when, on a sudden, I, wading across lots on a springy ground half prairie and half marsh, where the wild growth tangled and tossed, a flash of brown-white wings flashing in flight and dulcet song rich with June's wild staccato thrilled me—discovered me until I set down the things I had foraged and wandered about with the vagabond of June and challenged him for another flight and another tune. When he came to the humid grass as on broken wing, I

came on stirring up the ecstasy in the throat of this lyrist, half maudlin with his own melody. "O bobolink, bobolink-link-link-bobolink, spring and spring and spring, O bobolink, bobolink," quavered on in flight which was as drunken as his voice but drunk with the wild delight of June and life. The wind blew free. The sky arched blue and very far. The world, the whole world seemed built for this bird minstrel, this wandering poet of the sky. Bobolink, thou art this day's musician. It needs nor will receive any other. Thou art sufficient.

And I discover the forage and set out again off again aimlessly. Blessed be the aimless ways when it is June. The going anywhere which leads to nowhere, or, what is more truthful, leads to everywhere. I had no direction. Cannot an emperor go where he will and as he will? I will follow or flee from the wind. I will meander with the stream or lie down beside it. I will putter along a prairie shining with flowers. I will run the bobolink down. I will sweat in the sun. I will saunter in the shadow. I will sprawl full length in the fragrant grass. I will follow the listless behests of my vagabond desire till the birds fall asleep to-night. If any, passing by, ask, "Where are you going?" the reply shall be "Somewhere," or else "Nowhere." Either will be truthful; neither will be so explicit as that he could run me down by my directions. Out with God somewhere—what a jocund destina-

tion! And I wander on wherever my feet go. They lead; I follow. We must not ask directions when out on a trip with the winds and the bobolink. I know that full well and ask no questions. Nay, where is good? I like it all round here. If I fall into a stream, that is good; and if I loiter by one, that is good. All things are made to order. Nothing can come amiss on a day like this. No, directions and distances when you are out trysting with June would be worse than an infelicity. Where the instinct of my feet led, thither I went. But the instinct was witful.

. . .

For I came in my journeys to a wild crab grove in radiant and amazing bloom. Nothing I ever saw of crab bloom was kinsman to this apocalypse. The wild crab at bloom I had known and loved since I was a college lad and fetched the perfumed branches to my bachelor room and had hung around them whensoever and wheresoever I could and had counted a few wild crab trees on my farm greater treasure than the crops which the farm was supposed to produce. I had climbed stake-and-rider fences and barbed-wire fences, and had run the gauntlet of angry dogs to get a whiff of wild crabs at bloom, so was I no tyro in crab blossoms. Wherever I had seen these pink, perfumed banners swaying in wind there had I gone *per aspera*, nothing caring. But here was the valley of Avillion and all abloom with the wild crab. I had not known what

flower it was shed perfume in the valley of Avillion till now. We shall find out all we want to know in due time. In this silence of odor and color no wind blew loudly. Nay, no wind blew at all. A forest of crab trees is what I had come upon. I shouted (and am I not a Methodist and who should stay me?). Shouted, imperially as an emperor. I had health and a day and a forest of wild crab in flower. I could not see out, nor through, nor up. They are my zenith and horizon. No leaves are visible, but flowers, flowers, flowers, flowers. The wealth of that lovely blossoming I have never seen approximated. You could not see the branches on which the blossoms hung. You saw no trunk, no branch, only solely a tree of pink perfume. I sprawled under the scent and color. I lay flat on my back, put my hands, fingers interknit, beneath my head for a pillow and let the day go as it would. I furloughed the world. I prayed and sung my psalm. I sang no penitential psalm that day, but the songs of Asaph and threw "selahs" in like an applause. The sky was blue I doubted not. It had been when of late I wandered into that world where the sky was pink perfume from day dawn to dark and a body wanted nothing other. I found myself speaking to myself of "the late world," as if it were defunct. How far away it was! God is here, and his garments are perfumed and like the light.

But the day waned; and I stepped not outside my tent. The world was not. The bobolink was silenced. Nothing sang or spake save the crab blossoms distilling their music and poetry—voices of silence. And ere I knew it the night was darkening down. Where has this day gone? A few minutes ago I came here and now the dark dawneth. Is it so in Avillion?

Day is spent and I must go. Trains do not wait for preachers. The day in my calendar is marked "Under the tent of the wild crab blossoming."

. . .

Certain old illuminators, when they had reached the longed-for last page and word, wrote in reverent wise "*Laus deo.*" I, in like manner, after a day of unspeakable delight under swaying branches of tourmaline pink doused with musk of the sky, write sedately in my heart, *Laus deo.*

XIII

WHERE MOUNTAIN AND PRAIRIE MEET

ON giving the landscape temporary consideration we would incline to the opinion that if mountain and prairie were related at all, they were distant relatives. They dwell in places so far apart and in regions so remote in purpose and in place as to be aliens one to the other. Yet here, as in many matters, we are in error. These are near neighbors and fast friends.

To-day I saw where they met and had holiday. A patch of mountain poppies was girded about with the wild profusion of dwarf sunflowers. I could have sung out like a boy with the first nibble of the spring. Here was the tryst of mountain and prairie. Sunflower and poppy. The poppy had wandered down from the mountain passes and acclivities and the sunflower had climbed on with the vagrant mood it wears in its yellow juices which course through its veins like ardent fires. The flower which far down on lower prairie levels stands tall as a man on horseback, here reaches barely to a grown man's knees, but the smile of the sun is there; and the eternal welcome of the prairies is there, and the

challenge of the morning is there, every yellow blossom standing tiptoe, waiting for the sunrise. The sunflower and the poppy, the prairie and the mountain, what resistless romancists these must ever be to such as have a dream-room in the soul. The prairie is the wide; and the mountain is the high; and when these two journey and look into each other's faces, I am one who would pilgrim far to see the meeting. The prairie is so wide and so fertile: the mountain is so high and so barren. I see his stately climbing now in serrate ranges which, "Like a old lions' whelk tooth," as Browning so jaggedly puts it, cuts the sky again and again, barren peaks snow-capped or so steep in some sides that no snow can cling to the swift acclivity, so all winter long and through, when the world is white as vair the black mountainside frowns on the plains below. Barren, blistered, treeless, grassless, uninhabited, save of the wild mountain sheep who covet scanty pastures, being God's born economists. The mountain builds no granary, seeing it would rot unprofited; for what boots a granary built if there be no corn?

The barren mountain, but the fertile prairie! There the herds feed and lie down as of old amidst the green pastures. There the plow turns fertile glebe and harvests clap their ruddy hands and sing. The prairie is competent to feed the hunger of the world. And is the mountain surly and angry and set on making the race of men

speedy mortalities? Nay, friend, the mountain is no ogre, but a man of high design.

Mountain and prairie are friends. They work in wide companionship and homely comity. They are met at parley like old friends. The poppy and the sunflower are at converse.

How white the poppy is and thorny! The desert mountain has gotten into the poppy's heart. It snarls and is ungracious to the touch, but is very fair to look upon. It has the white heart. Its blood is like liquid moonbeams and its face is like blooming starlight. It slumbers from sunset to sunrise and then like some fair maiden, arrayed in spotless white, walketh out at the daylight to greet its lord. I have seen mountain poppies as fast asleep, to all appearances, as a tired child and as altogether unwakable, yet at the first kiss of the sun they would leap out into blooming like a resurrection. They too are children of the sun. They root them in the mountain loneliness and loveliness and wander out on the deserts below the mountain refuges; but they know their king. They are not children of the night, but children of the light and of the day. From sun's going to sun's coming, they are dim and remote from all the things that breathe and sing. They could hear no whippoorwill at song if one came and sang beneath their lattice. "My lady sleeps" (in Poe's poem). But when the Lover comes and leans and kisses her pale lips, then does this

sleeping beauty cry aloud and shine out in white apparelment which no desert or mountain dust can ever tarnish. "I am awaiting thee, my king."

Withal how the starlight has whispered unbeknown into the veins of the poppy. So we have not thought on it, nor would account us wise who whispered it, but the starlight hath sung its melody into the poppy's heart so that the flower is garmented not by the sun but by the stars. The poppy is white as clad in woven starbeams. Night and the day are met when the glistering whiteness of the poppy opens at a whisper from the sun.

The prairie is here. The sunflower hath climbed the hill. The desert hath not crowded this torch-bearer back. This royal flower is still elate. It slumbers not. There are no nights in the sunflower's calendar. This prairie blossom wanders through all the halls of night with face so full of sunlit cheer as that all the long avenues of dreams are full as of quiet laughter with the lit lamps which cannot snuff their splendor out. The prairie watches for the sun as the mountain summits sublime are wont to do. The sunflowers are the prairie's sentinels on whom command is laid. "Sleep not, but wake and watch the advent of my lord, the King." And when the sun cries out along a hundred leagues of grass the prairie's flower hath turned its hundred thousand faces to perceive his advent.

The sunflowers stand all night, here, keeping wakeful guard above the slumbrous poppies, their lamps all trimmed and burning and oil in their lamps. Not one foolish virgin in all this incalculable multitude. All lamps lit, all lamp-bearers awake and laughing in utter content and joyousness, and all shining lamps of yellow flame across the faces of the sleeping poppies spent with fatigue and lost in dreams. And at noon, sunflower and poppy, prairie and mountain, awake and well content and swooning not although the desert heat at the mountain's base is torrid. When shall I forget these flowers of starlight and of sunlight swarming on the dreary plain? My prairie and my mountain, once again I greet you, and may I meet you and your sun and poppy flower where deserts swelter no more in fierce discontent, amidst the laughter of the running streams of heaven, meet you.

XIV

WHEN THE WORLD IS AN APPLE ORCHARD IN FULL BLOOM

WHEN the farmer is a poet anything beautiful may happen and that without trouble. Landing at Fort Dodge, Iowa, to dedicate a noble church with a chime of bells of rare melody, set by a widowed heart in memory of her husband who had been a public man, whose voice had had an orchestral music in it and had spoken through years for all right things, mine adversary who met me at the station said, in a sly way, that if I could spare a few minutes, he would motor me to an apple orchard of one hundred eighty-six acres. My reply, in equal courtesy, was that though my time was of great value, I being a man of affairs, I thought I *could* take a very few minutes off to go to the orchard in bloom. These diplomatic preliminaries having gotten on satisfactorily to both participants therein, we took a rush for the orchard. He said it was in bloom. He told the truth. We rushed through the beautiful city: we spied the happy children with laps full, arms full, hearts full of wild flowers, fresh plucked from the dear woodland ways. We cruised along a stream,

then crossed it: we bounded up the hill, and looked down on a pool of wild crabs, eagering to be at flower. The motor sniffed the apple breath and hurried up and we turned from the main road with a whir and went laughing up a lane amidst all sorts of kindly trees, promiscuously planted and jostling each other as if God had planted them; and apple trees crowd up close as if inquisitive to see the faces of these callers and the master of the motor, as he steered us lightly, to a query of mine, "Does this man know how beautiful this is?" rejoined, "He is something of a poet, in a way." Ah, yes, something of a poet in a way, in God's way, I found him.

His house was well back from the road. The road could not see his house nor could his house see the road. It was embowered in quiet and the hush of happy winds and bees drooning, and trees crowded together in a veritable city of music. We might have been in Edmund Spenser's Faerie Land where all things mystical and dreamful could happen effortlessly as a star-rise. We are intruders on a poet's premises. I watched to see him. Honestly, I am curious, though no woman am I, yet curiosity always seizes me when I am in a neighborhood of poetry. I want to guess the looks of poets and rectify my conclusions by facing the facts. We ran up a ravine intruded on by the inquisitive apple trees which came close to peer at us like kindly

cattle in a pasture, and took by surprise a white cottage embowered in many trees of many species and then the road dropped into a half-ravine where a crystal spring lay unwrinkled beneath willows, common and laurel-leaved, and it dreamed back from its face willows and sky while a runnel which did not whisper slipped down to a stream hard by. On the banks our poet farmer had planted pine and many willows and a cut-leafed birch, beautiful enough to have adorned the woodlands of paradise. I was nosing around for the poet-farmer.

His trees and vines had been disposed with much poet lore of place and variety on a bank which lifted its broadly rounded shoulder and looked over a generous expanse of river and bridge and highway and opposing acclivity and croft where distant vistas of apple trees shone like dashes of sea foam on ocean rocks. In my mind's eye I could see our farmer friend in quiet love of loveliness with spade in hand and little trees for the planting lying close at hand, and he planting and planting and digging and planting.

Can there be greater fun or greater poetry than planting trees and having their to-morrows of bloom and fruit haunt you with their prophecy? The thrust of the spade in the sod, the tossing out of the damp earth, with eternal harvest promise in its breath and its residuum of all earth's yesterdays and also the kindly promise of its many to-morrows, and then when

the hole is deep enough and wide enough and the ground within mellow enough to put your hands in it and mix the soil (cool and sweet the soil is, and clings like a curl about the fingers), and then with ample gentleness to dispose the roots and rootlets of the tree-to-be but shrub that is, and sift earth about those thready roots and cover them up very gently, as you would a grave in which lay a dead robin redbreast; then when all the babying process is concluded to press the moist earth with your foot until you surmise the roots are bedded and feel at home, and so, rising, do the like with another tree. That's fun. Men want pay for doing it, but 'tis infamous. They should pay for the privilege of doing this poetical thing. An orchardist should not plant too many trees at once lest the labor tax the poetry in him and he do a lovely thing in an unlovely mood. I would plant a few at a time and vary the kind I planted —here a lilac, here a dogwood, here a wild crab, now a sycamore, now a hazelnut, now a white willow, here a Niobe willow, here a cottonwood, here a wild rose, now a Dorothy Perkins, then a bittersweet, now a red bud, now a fruit tree for fruit, now fruit trees by clumps for spring flowers and autumnal leaf-glory (say, a group of pear trees which when autumn burns is memorable and their watch fires have a strange glory on them), here a clump of cedars, here a stray pine, then a birch, and here sassafras for autumn

splendor like summer in conflagration, here a wild rose, now an aster, here a trillium, now a rosa rugosa to give single rose blossom all the summer through. What a degradation not to know that all this is a liberal culture if done in the spirit of the Master of the Garden and the Wildwood.

Would all the farmers were poets! How goodly would their sweet vocations seem as well as how wholesome; and a refined ecstasy would run along their veins through all the months which constitute the year. Not to perceive the fun and poetry of farming is to rob the soul; and not to know the poetry of agriculture is a misdemeanor of unusual proportions. Woe is me if poetry slips from my vocabulary when I plant and sow and fain would reap. It is as delicious to see trees of your own hand-planting grow as to swim in a crystal stream under pine shadows. To work with a grim utility makes people old before their time; while to know each morning is a pageant and each night's arrival a beatitude, redeems labor from drudgery and turns farming into an æsthetic procedure like carving a Milo's Venus.

Meantime I am in the apple orchard and digressing, though I make no apologies, seeing digressions are the worth-whiles on the Pipes of Pan. I am hunting for the poet who planted this orchard and these other unfruitful trees which bear the pleasant apples of far Hesperides, for though we eat not this fruit, we none the

less know full well it is an edible to the soul. "Where is the poet-farmer?" inquire I of the questful mood. Whereupon the guide of the apple orchard in bloom bids me be patient and we shall find him somewhere in the happy miles of orchard. So on we move in quest of the poet who planted this farm to perfect flower and promissory fruit. We come on him at a turn in the road.

He is ideal and satisfies my soul. He is unshaven for a spell and his face is husky as no smooth-shaven face ever does look. We men look polite when smoothly shaven, but not neglectful enough to be part of the growing world. Closely trimmed lawns are neither rational nor æsthetic. They have lost spontaneity. They are only well-bred and conventional. Grass grown by those who know how will be let alone; so must trees and whiskers. And a man clean-shaven each morning and talcumed looks polite enough but lacks patent power and the indefatigably robust, nor could he be pictured as a cowboy on the run nor a victorious soldier on the battle front. Our friend was unkempt enough to be a part of nature where things get their way and caper a little rather than go by dancing master's rules. His hair and mustache were grizzled. This poet had been on this ground a good while, as testify the vines and shrubs and orchard he had planted and the snow flakes that refuse to melt from his pow and the lines that

zigzagged like genial lightning along his looks. He was in his shirt sleeves. Of course! Could a man be a poet-farmer and go around in his coat all the while? Preposterous! Say that word again, and say it louder. Adam never wore a coat. He went around with his shirt sleeves rolled up every day of his redolent year, sown to musk odors and dew-drench of the night and dawn. You don't look like business with a trim coat on when you're going about poetastering in a paradise. You look like a clothing merchant, which won't do for an out-of-doors poet. Nay, verily. More nay verilies. To be sure, he wore no cuffs. You can't cuff your way to the proprietorship of multimiles of odorous orchard blooms.

His hands were naked and dirty with the dirt in which trees root – good clean, undirty dirt, loved by all flowers, trailing arbutus, fuchsias, May apples, Solomon's seals, prairie phlox, flowerless fronds of ferns, and wistful wild violets—that good dirt was on his hands; and his hands were brawny and masterful. When I shook hands with him I knew a man was owner of that right hand, hard at the palm, sinewy of fingers, dignified of labor, coworker with the ground and the sky, and the God of both to make the world beautiful in its season. It was a handsome hand, which if interpreted to mean "some hand," the exegesis would be legitimate. It would be ridiculous even to think of that brawny, business

hand wearing white kid gloves. Honestly, that would make a mummy laugh. White kid gloves on these hands! Positively, that is past jest; that is insult. This man in evening clothes? Cease such suggestions, lest the poet-farmer and I both grow angry and throw you from these premises, landing you where you belong in the rubbish heap for the spring freshets to wash away.

We are shaking hands, the poet-farmer and I. And his hat is a work of art. It is a high art, seeing it is at the top of this man. There is where a hat should stay. It was a derby which was a psychological blunder as well as a caput-al-mistake, but I think it had been bought by his wife or hired man at a bargain sale; for I would exonerate him from having chosen it. This should have been a soft hat. That settles on your head and to it like suds about your hands at the washing. You can sit on it and not indent it. You can wad it up and throw it at a mule and not disfigure the mule much nor your hat any. This hat was, so to say, homogeneous, if at times a little incoherent, incoherency caught, I think, from the brain of the wearer. This orchard hat was a derby, but an old one. Thank goodness! Age will dignify even a derby hat, on which I remark that after that, no wonderwork may be thought impossible to age. There was an indentation on one side thereof as if an apple tree in a storm had blown against it. The hat had an inebriated look as if the smell of the

apple-bloom breath had made it tipsy. It sat akimbo on the poet's head, as if born out under the trees, in a wind-blown fashion like a wind-turned leaf. The hat had a weather-beaten, sunburnt look as if it could have voted and sat like a small boy on a gate post when a circus invades the town.

The orchardist wore shoes. That was a tribute to civilization. He should have worn sandals or, which was better, should have gone barefoot. Unquestionably, barefootedness is the right footgear for a farmer; and besides, it minds us of how among Maeterlinck's happinesses in "The Blue-Bird" there troops "the happiness of going barefoot in the dew." I feel the grass tickling my legs right now! So, I met the master of these florescent revels, this farmer-Prospero who has covered up all this orchard and runnel bank and comb and long reach with a white foam of an ocean far-spreading to the sky, an ocean of precious apple-bloom. Howbeit, not as at the wave of good man Shakespeare's bearded Prospero, but at the dig of this Prospero's spade and hoe has this ocean been turned into a turbulence of storm so that the green waves are all one wild wallow of foam, white to the eyes as sea gull's wings. The old Greeks yclept the poet "Poietes," a maker. Wherefore by my halidome (from Captain Dalgetty and others whose names slip me now) and in good sooth, this friend of my recent making is squarely and irrefutably a poet,

for has he not made this orchard? Incidentally, God helped him, though of what other poet is that not true? Poets make not themselves, else all professors of literature would be poets, whereas none of them are. They pull poetry to pieces and tell how had they written it, it would have been written, but forget to remark that in such case people had not read it. I read how many changes should have been made in Milton's unapproachable music of "Paradise Lost," and then regard gleefully the consideration that as Milton made the poem, so it stands. The critical mutterings do not disturb the everlasting calm of that illustrious poem.

Yes, this orchard-maker is poet when we allow the old Greek notion concerning poetry. I found the orchardist genial. He would go with us through his land of wonder, though we forbade him in the name of the value of his time. He felt conditioned to do as he pleased on his own premises and heeded not our prattlings, but went with us. It was like walking with Alfred Tennyson or him of the "Marshes of Glynn." How he loved it all! To hear him talk of the growing of the orchard was like hearing Tennyson's ocean voice read "Ulysses." At least so I think. He knew the birthdays of the willows at the stream-head and of the pine trees on the shoulder of the hill that looked down on the winding river and the birthday of the vines which tangled over the hackberry trees,

wild vagrants of the sky, and the birthday of the apple trees which marshaled the landscape we behold like white clouds billowing. He had rocked every cradle of every tree in this wide wandering land of foamy loveliness. I could all but hear the lullabies he sang them with his man's sturdy voice hushed till it crooned like an autumn wind.

The orchard was now untouched of the plow, paved with bluegrass. Not a weed intruded on the scene, only flashing green of grass, than which the high God has made no growing thing more witchery-crowded. To walk on floor of green with amethyst skies sweet above, Heigh O the wind and the rain! Along the green paths of apple bloom, as if they had fallen from the wet hand of a rainy wind, lay apple branches dead, and wistful to be given one last laughter of an apple tree fire. My fingers itched to gather the dead scattered branches, for whether it be sea-soaked driftwood of ships of yesterday or hickory wood or pine knots and branches high up in the mountains, I am of the mood to believe that none of them surpass apple trees for poetry of flame. Hickory sparkles swim up the sky with crackling fairy salutations as fired from some fairy headland, minute yet delicious salvos of a fleet sailing out not to return, whereas apple trunks and boughs emit their sparkles without a syllable of voice, just aerial flamboyancy, the beading of apple blooming and apple juice with

its hint of mild inebriation which ends in poetical hilarity which makes for the laughter of the angels.

I wanted to stay in those miles of apple blooms till the sun had set and the stars had risen and the moon had filled the sky with its wonder-light for which there are no words. And to have lit an apple-tree fire and to have sat beside it would have been to set a linnet's song to a lark's music. With the smoke and the efflorescent sparkles and the lovely and the exalted night and the apple-bloom breath, there would have been a joy like being sung to by angels.

And this one hundred eighty-six acres of apple trees in bloom must be experienced to be apprehended. I do not say comprehended, for that is a witless word in such a scene. Throughout its length and breadth and height (for this orchard of bloom was cubic measure and so no superficial area could compass the phrasing of it) was perfect peace of a perfect day. Perfect peace! Height was its most splendid dimension. The height led up to God.

This was no hemisphere we dwelt in, but a whole sphere. We could not see out. It was a world far-going, glad-going, so white the petals were, scarce touched by any pink at all. That was a peculiarity of the apple blossoms we beheld in this orchard to-day. 'Twas a white wonderland. It was starlight rather than dawnlight. We were shut in by apple bloom. If this apple-

blossom world ended, we could only surmise it. The vistas of green paths between rows of redolent flowers ended by being swallowed up by the bloom. No green road traveled through this illimitable world. End was there none to the apple blossoms. The only way out of the foam of flower was to transcend the world and take passage into the blue of the overhead.

On we went loiteringly, always loiteringly, truly. Could a body be so unmannerly as to haste in such a house of praise as this? The gladness seems like great laughter. Each tree was preempted by flowers as the magnolia whose flowers come and cover the tree completely or ever there is a dream of leaf. And every tree was like a nosegay held out in the hand of God to be worn at an angel's heart.

An auto load of women came into this sanctuary of perfumed beauty. Where is it where beauty is present that lovely women do not come seeing God has made them such lovers of beauty in everything except husbands? They seem color-blind in men. Goody! But here they were, these women younger or older according to their age (I think that is admirably put and compromises neither the women nor me), all aglow with the wonder of the glory of the apple orchard in full flower. And they wanted to cut apple branches! I think they would have done it without permission. Women have an anarchistic strain in their blood though they look so docile.

But the master of the revels was here and gave them leave. They used it. It was funny to see them saw the branches with a jack-knife. But for politeness, I should have smiled. It is a grim thing to be polite. But they broke and sawed and laughed out loud in chorus and the poet orchard-master bade them be generous in their taking, and some such words to us men, and when we were too polite to mutilate his majestical bouquets of a whole tree at unanimous flower, he took his huge pruning knife and cut off young trees blossom-laden and made us bear them as his contribution to the dedicatory service of the church on the morrow.

And so thither the flowers came on that good to-morrow when the chimes rained out holy hymns, and the people sang out like the voice of many waters and I, poor slipshod that I was, in that high function, tried to preach. But the apple blossoms outpreached, outsang, outchimed us all.

When God's flowers turn minister then truly is there a saintly sermon. "Bloom ye," said the Sunday apple blossoms. "Bloom ye, ye folk of God, even as bloom we, God's apple orchard. As we, so ye, yield bloom and fruit to the glory of God the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen."

XV

WHEN THE WORLD IS AN APPLE ORCHARD IN FULL FRUIT

THERE are things too sweet to tell about. This apple orchard in full fruit is one of them. The plague of lovely things is that while the observer of them is well aware he cannot tell the loveliness he sees, this very incapacity digs rowels in his side to drive him on to attempt what himself in conscience knows through all his fineness and deepness he cannot do. If I here bestir me to attempt what I should not attempt but shall attempt and know my inability to achieve, the fault is not mine: it is the fault of the apple orchard in full fruit.

Another where have I dipped my pen in apple-blossom perfume to inscribe a prose lyric to an apple orchard in full bloom. With whatever of insagacity and incapacity I performed that feat, I did it with a sky-wide and sky-high sincerity. I wanted to catch the perfume of that paradise and swing it in an earthen censer till thousands of hearts should have wafted across their winter world with the blowing trumpets of winter winds apple fragrance to inundate their hearts with springtime.

If, now, stung by the splendor of this autumnal glow and the riot of the hills and this apple orchard in bewilderment of fruit not passed into dull prosaicality by the act of fruitage but redolent with poetry of the spring wonder of spring blossom, I essay this other landscape and fruited loveliness, I shall exonerate myself as being incompetent to keep silence in the presence of summer which luxuriated in growth and panted toward this plenty which covered the valleys and overran the hills.

I ran across this particular apple orchard after a goodly manner. A gracious woman dared me, and who was I, possessed as I am of a stock of man-bravery, to let a woman's dare go unaccepted? The day of the challenge was serious with Indian summer haze and far-off mist which portended no rain. It simply said in entrancing words that Indian summer was come to pitch her tent a few days amongst us. I was preaching-bound. What so becomes any regalest day of a man's life as lifting his voice about the good God who, loving the race of man with a love that baffles human understanding, thought it no trouble to die for men, when the preacher himself is one of those died for? I will preach on every great day of the soul, for in so doing I attempt my wildest attempt to strike wings with the winged blood-washed immortals who have a residence in heaven. So, amidst tumult of autumnal splendor among Pennsylvania mountains, I was en route

to lift my voice for the Builder of the mountains and the great Great Forester who planted the trees and gave them this everlasting poetry. We were driving away from a new moon with its silver sickle whetted for harvest on the hills, the harvest of glorious foliage and falling leaves, and the misty mountains smoked across by the Indian summer smoke as if all the wigwams that ever kindled a wood fire had puffed their blue smoke into this October sky. I was to stay the night where I was to preach and—intrudes the gracious woman who with her gracious husband for Jehu drove to this tryst with God. "If you will go back with us," said the enchantress, "we will take you to mountaintop where you shall see such an apple orchard as your eyes have never rested on." And the husband's voice swung in with its musical echo of assent and urgency. Now, I being an extemporaneous speaker, was not caught napping for a reply. My voice with the velocity of a flock of quails when they first take to wing answered "I will." It sounded swift and eager like a bridegroom's response at the marriage altar. The night was hurrying into gloaming and I cannot be sure in that semiobscurity whether my swift acceptance took the proponents thereof by surprise, but they answered to it with a laughter which seemed like the bells of hospitality all ringing at once. So the die was cast (*alea jacta est*, quoth Mr. Cæsar—Julius, to be exact). I had crossed no

Rubicon but had stepped into the brook of a setting day to cross to a day all wonder and wistfulness and invitation to my soul. So the evening preachment ended and the Christian good-bys said, we betook us to the journey to the apple orchard in full fruit, hurrying through the starry dark whence the moon had vanished and where perfume of fallen leaves nigh made the spirit swoon as under the song of the nightingale.

I am confirmed in the belief that the gadfly which stung Io was the gadfly of beauty which must be told. Capable or incapable no matter, beauty whispers in insistent whispers "Attempt." However humble the perceiver of the beautiful, the peremptory voice prompts: "Say it. Tell the scene. Make no delay."

> "Grandly begin; though thou have time
> But for one line, be that sublime,"

said Poet Lowell while the summons of the sunrise and the stars and great deeds marching with running march to death crushed about his soul like reverberating thunderbolts. With us lesser men and women the summons is the same. We seem not to have a choice. It must be told. There are not enough to tell this tale, wherefore all poets rise to the voice and write. It will be perfectly clear that this writer is well aware how inapposite his attempted endeavor and wishes to bow himself from the stage before the hissing at his hardihood accelerates his departure.

No matter. He knows what he cannot do, and none the less he will push blithely on and attempt.

Under the cool night with stars at Indian summer dimness we rode. A sweet wind languished along the way. The night was voiceless save for the song of the high-powered car in which we sped, singing that song of happy toil which is one of the daily and nightly miracles of toiling hearts and toiling hands. When the birds build their nests and feed their broods and the nestlings are very hungry, then is when the wild birds sing their wildest songs. When they do but feed themselves they are silent. Singing befits labor as wings befit birds. So on we fared like night boats upon a kindly sea tossing up and down on the waves of the hills instead of waves of the water. Our course lay down hill toward a river. Our career was undulant, to be sure, as fits all mountains, but still downward bound. The Jehu voice said "Now, up mountain to the apple orchard." I had been well enough content in all reason feeling the dewy night and exchanging kisses with remote stars and having goodly fellowship with Christian friends with whom I am to fellowship in the eternal heavens. Yet at that prompt summons we headed off the road of our night ride and began to make visible ascent by detour truly, as the mountain forbade a sixty-horse-power car going straight up. The high shoulders of a mountain are on one side and pressing close to brush my cheek as I leaned

from the car to catch every night breath the boughs ran past me with caress for my face; and star-revealed, a bit of dark on the other side where another mountain across a dark ravine gloomed in reticent state with stars glittering on its forehead, and on we passed and climbed our winding ways when the drip of water from a wayside spring made a body thirsty even in the damp dark, and I wanted to stop; but it was past midnight and our lady must in sooth have her beauty sleep, not as needing it but as insisting on it, and our Bucephalus climbed on nothing lingering, toward the apple orchard which every moment became more tangible ecstasy although an invisible ecstasy, then a last sprint and a glimpse of green visible under the trifling candles of the stars, the vivid green of fall wheat rejoicing in its first meeting of the light, then a turn and a spurt of laughter and the apple-breath saluted us and we came to a laughing standstill in the heart of the apple orchard.

There I slept the little remainder of the night with heart all eager for the dawn and the sunup and the promise of the apple trees. You, reader, if so be you have never slept in an apple orchard guest-room with stars for candles and sky for roof, and the night wandering wind for minstrelsy, and apple orchard smells to sift through your slumbers, then, know this that God has in store for you some belated poetry.

The morning came. A mid Indian summer morning. I need say no further word for such as love the Indian summer, as all poets do, and lesser poets like poetasters. We were on the summit of one mountain but not on the mountain summit. I like that distinction, for it is no hair-splitting. It is sonorous music. To crest a mountain has its overpowering revelation, but to top one mountain and have another mountain climbing on and up with lesser mountains and woodlands and valley-glimpses open before your eyes and climbing on to other scenes, "T'other mountain," aye, heart, that is quintessential gladness. We see, but not all. There be other mountain heights still climbing and invitational and revelational. "You are come," the other climbing mountain beckons, "not to the summit but to the summons. Come hither. I wait for ye. Haste not but come."

The valley which watched toward the mountain of the apple orchard in full fruit was hidden in the mist. I could see no whither. The fog filled the crevices in the hills or lazily turned over in their sleepy beds. They were in no haste to rise. Nor had I been but that my stay was brief in this paradise and I was unfamiliar with the unaccustomed spectacle and must be up and doing while it is apple-orchard-day, for the night cometh when I can see it no longer but must onward on the circle of my journey.

The mists that held the valley save at tem-

porary intervals and forbade distinctness were straggling up betimes over the mountains and smoked up along "T'other mountain" and made its ascent at times at a leisurely pace as being native here, and having other days and needing not to do all its mountain climbing in one day as I mine. A fog always lures me like a hidden voice of wood thrush while the dark begins. I like not too glaring spectacles. Calm and quiet tints are to my mind, save fall in leaf splendor, or the drench of sunset and afterglow on waters when there is "a sea of glass mingled with fire." I like the glory then; but rather modest tints like the shot silk luster on a mourning dove's wedding gown. And there is a half dusk in a fog. It diffuses itself idly but surely and conceals so as to give wings to imagination and invitation to expectation. In fine, I like it and I love it. Had I arranged this scenario to my liking, I had had one less satisfying to my heart than what I had. God goes beyond our imaginings. He is always going a little further than our largest expectations. We cannot outrun him though our feet be sandaled with the lightnings. His slowness is swifter than our breathless speed.

I am content. The misty morning veiled the day. Expectation laid finger on the speaking lips. We were haunted for a word. The apple orchard is not more visible than in the dusk but was surely near. The apple breath spread through

the mist like a brook song as saying, "Fear not, I am here." I wandered early through the fog toward the mountain, passed apple trees, and great apple trees spoke to me like a sentinel saying, "Who goes there? Give the countersign." I halted, saluted and gave the countersign. "When the world is an apple orchard in full fruit." "Pass on," the apple sentinel said.

The house of my friends, my good hosts and owners of the apple orchard in full fruit, was fitting the neighborhood. It made me recall the Scripture description so woodsy and out-of-doorsy, "a lodge in a garden of cucumbers." The lodge was set on a hillcrest. It was a summer habitation only. No plaster clung to the walls. The boards smelled of pine. The bedrooms were against the shingles and opened on many sides to the Indian summer sky. I was only hoping that the fogs might change from mist to rain, and straightly charged my friends that should they hear rain falling in the night, they should awaken me on the moment, for I must not miss the patter and pother of the rain on the roof where I could touch the shingles with my hands. My sleeping chamber opened onto the sky. And thus on the mountaintop I seemed to be sleeping on the air. Seeing below and above, I saw in the night nothing else sleepily and drowsily but sky misting around me from the chamber of my cozy dreaming.

And now that the day had waked on the

mountains and I was wandering wide awake as the day, I could at a goodly distance hear the voices of the blessed woman in song or speech on her back stoop coming out to boss her husband, and he bringing the water and kindling the fire and bringing the wood and whatever-I-can-do-nextly. And when the bacon began to fry it mixed its perfume with the apple orchard breath tantalizingly. There is in bacon something very sociable. The smell of frying bacon never intrudes on anything, picnicking, love-making or apple-orcharding. It walks easily into the company of them all. It is not convivial but is sociable. It makes folks chatter and smile and has the odor of wood smoke and speaks of hospitality. So in the hearing of bacon odors I turned toward the lodge in the apple orchard in full fruit not as designing to hasten or as being hungry, but as feeling the attraction of hospitality, so that when the man of the orchard was bid by the woman of the orchard (as I heard her do) to call me to breakfast, I was present and needing no calling but when he lifted up his voice, I noiselessly said "Adsum," after the manner of dear Colonel Newcomb, of fragrant memory.

And what a breakfast it was with the hostess for the cook and the host for a butler and I the behostessed and be-buttled. The butler and I decided in the spirit of democracy to let the cook eat with us. She did, for if she hadn't we would

not have eaten at all. To be accurate though not felicitous, that cook was a lassie. I can say that and must. What a breakfast we had, and grace after as well as before meat!

Then for the day. No one could hold me from the orchard. Truly I was in the orchard, nevertheless was orchard bound. 'Twas a spacious place and it was calling me by name and I could hear the apple pickers coming up the road on the winding hill and down from the mountaintop, voices of men and women sounding far in the damp morning air as though they were near. They spoke no secrets though intending so to do. These were they who would charge for picking apples though they should have paid for the chance. Apple-picking is to be classed as play and never as work. But some people are undeniably queer. These apple pickers were. Miles of apple trees waited their coming. October was speeding on toward Christmas. There must be no unneedful delay in picking these apples—miles of them, and thousands of bushels of them. The apples themselves knew it was high time for them to cease their badinage with the dusks and dawns upon the apple-tree branches and come to the spacious cellars with food and perfume and apple dumplings and laughter of many children. An apple is willing servant of human life. It is no misanthrope. Why should it be, having a whole spring and summer through had all the winds and birds and stars trysting

with it and caressing it? Its life-time had been sweet and spent in God's out-doors amid the patter of the rain and rustle of its leaves in the coming and the going of the winds and the callings of the dawns and the gentle intrusions of the dark. O happy summer and happy holiday which was to end in making many little children happy and contented when they went to bed to sleep with a red apple in their hands. Happy day and happy apple day for the apple orchard in full fruit.

I heard the apple pickers on the road and I heard the wagons rumbling coming to take the apples in goodly barrels and baskets to be sent rapid transit to the cities far away, and I thought how happy the apple orchard was in blooming and growing and ripening and being picked and finally coming to the helping of the human race whose servants they are and whose glad servants they love to be. I went out among the apple trees among the pickers, where I was an apple picker, and the lord of this apple vineyard took me to the packing house where the moving belt brought every apple into judgment. It was Judgment Day for the apples. They could not evade. Every basket came from the pickers' hands and was tumbled topsy turvy on the running belt to find compulsory way each apple to its own place and under no mandate of man but solely by their own selves were they judged, the little, the large, the largest going

automatically to its own place. The sorting was done by the apples themselves, not a voice in the air, but the judgment was as truly awarded as if the thunder had pronounced the sentence; and there was no wailing. The apples accepted the verdict of their own growth and went their several ways.

Then the proprietor of the orchard took me in the car and went in and out, happy in and happy out, of acres and thousands and thousands of bushels of apples. The trees were loaded down. They hung to the ground under their weight of fruit, not a tree complaining at its load but happy in it as God's folks are in their burdens. This car could do everything but turn somersets. It performed all sorts of apple-tree tricks, and followed the apple rows and apple trees like a bronco follows a steer. The car did not exactly climb any apple tree while I was occupant, though I think it had done so at a sign. It liked this job, that was apparent. It ran up to the mountaintop, wriggled in among the apple pickers and apple trees, headed downward when it might with all accuracy be said to stand on its head, but never have rush of blood to the head, explored ravines crowded with the glowing glory of roseate apples, capered up on the other hill, and always eagerly and smilingly.

I was in my shirt sleeves ready for business. I could climb a tree and turn an apple somerset, eat an apple or pick it. I was ready. I ate an

apple, I turned an apple somerset, I picked an apple. In accuracy I picked many apples, and what fun it was to pull a branch down and pluck it bare of redolent fruit! I could have made myself rich in a few days with my apple agility and strenuosity, but I did not. I did show of what apple metal I was made, and there the demonstration ended; I went on looking at the orchard, chatting with the trees, giving them and they me a "Howdydo," to our mutual pleasure.

The mist lifted a little but not altogether. A piece of torn mantle of fog would now and then trail across the orchard or flutter from the brow of a hill or mount the mountaintop and then return, not knowing whether it was coming or going. There was variety everywhere in this apple orchard, yet was every minute set to music —the low, sweet, haunting music of the fruit. The orchard situated on a mountainside had this delightful characteristic—that the miles of trees uphill or downhill or half-ravine hidden were all visible at one glance whether you stood above or below. In spring, when these apple trees were in blossom, it must have been heavenly, and now when these same apple trees were at fruit it was heavenly- all heavenly. You could see the trees afar off and almost count the apples hanging against the blue background of sky or the blurred glory of the background of the autumn-foliaged mountain as the apples hung like huge

rubies, howbeit edible rubies. A ruby is a costly stone and very beautiful, but as a matter of diet it is a trifle indigestible and hard on store teeth.

When mine host of this apple vineyard had to go down to town at the foot of the mountain on business matters pertaining to orcharding, I loitered along any apple road that invited, and they all invited. An apple orchard is always hospitable—fragrant hospitality. Every tree beckoned as to say: "Sample my apples. How do you like the kind of apple I am?" What a thing it was to hear an apple orchard grow colloquial! People think apples are dumb, and know no vocabulary and cannot frame fine phrases. Such people are ignoramuses and should attend an apple orchard school with an apple tree in fruit for a staid school-teacher. Truly this was a haunted land. Sometimes I could glimpse a stretch of road down in the valley climbing over the hills and a far-seen glory of landscape, the mist floating away and the Indian-summer haze lying calmly to the remotest sky and veiling the hills with its veil of unspeakable loveliness. And as I went onward I would lie down betimes under an apple tree, invited thereto by the apple tree's shadow and perfume and hospitality and wearied a little by my climbing down and up, and my excess of gladness in this apple world in which I found myself a vagabond of the hills. How sweet it was to lie flat on the back with the apples burning crimson above me

and their bent arms apple-crowded making a tent on all sides of me, and the dim blue of the sky shining in lattices through the tree branches, and now and then an apple falling with a bump as to say, "If you won't pick me, I will pick myself for you!" There, with the lassitude of the day and the lassitude of my spirit and the languor of a happy and contented heart, I would rest and refute all invitations to hurry and get busy and do something. Were not the apples resting a little themselves, and should not I, their lover, in consonance with their moods, rest too? What a fine argument that is for a lazy man to solace himself with.

I wended my way to the rim of the orchard where the forest grew and lay down under their shadow where the leaves were thick with recent falling and where as I lay other leaves wandered carelessly and unhastingly down and fell on me like a caress. Can there be any luxury sweeter than to lie in fall woods amongst falling leaves and see them eddy at every chance breath of the wind that wanders down the mountainside, and then, when the wind passes, note seldom leaves falling, not because they must but because they would. The Indian-summer haze, the perfume of the leaves, the resting my head on a cushion of multi-colored leaves, the letting my lazy eyes wander outward and upward and outward and downward where I could see the blaze of autumn bonfires in the glorious con-

flagration of the woods. And now and then as I rose and went forward blithely but leisurely I saw a blue bird's nest in a knotted hollow of the apple tree or a robin's nest perched in the branch of the trees and intruded on by the apples, and I heard along the apple orchard a blue bird's voice "ber-mu-da-ing" as being lonely and on the wing for the sunny South where winter is pushed aside by spring. And I confess that I love not the blue bird's sky blue of garment or his springtime song more than I love his autumnal garment and his autumn song. Both haunt me and heal my heart. In the robin's silent house where birdlings were, leaves now are the nestlings. The robins have with easy stages taken their way south. Again I hear the blue bird's voice and love him for it. His migration more accentuates the blue bird's lovely note, not strong as its springtime lyric, but sadly sweet like a good-by said in music. I wished the blue bird would not go south in winter when I stay north, yet they will do their blue-bird way to the end of their blue-birding. Now their song says: "We linger but we must go. We want to stay but the tug of the South is on us and our wings want the sky, the sunny sky, the haunting sky." And they flew past me like blue leaves from a gaudy forest, still saying, "Grieve not for us; we shall be back in the spring, ber-mu-da, ber-mu-da and the spring." It was a song like the heartache of the falling leaf

set to melody. They seem to be singing what falling leaves feel and have no voice to utter.

Still the Indian-summer haze hangs over the apple orchard and the miles of trees soon to be appleless and leafless—just a vintage of emptiness with fallen leaves and fallen snowflakes mingled with them. The wind was taking a holiday save on the mountain's crest. In all my happy life of gypsying with the outdoors I do not know a day of sweeter cadences of sky and tree and misty hills and pathetic autumnal suggestion and voices. "The pathos of a fallen leaf," Poet Aldrich has it. It cannot be better put. That lovely lonesome line will last as long as the fallen leaf hovers a little in the sky and then voicelessly settles to its slumber on the ground. My heart rested in the landscape.

The house of hospitality, the lodge in the apple orchard, was visible, sitting silent in the dim sunlight as dozing and on the verge of winter solstice. The voice of the sweet hostess who loved this mountain quiet and solitude saturated with poetry could be heard (for she loved the pipe organ and was mistress of its sonorous melody), and she was singing hymns, holy hymns of holy hope and life everlasting; than which no music is sweeter nor any music so sweet; and her song and voice fitted into the silence and the scene and the sky and the cathedral aisle of the apple orchard in full fruit as though they had been the aisles of some stately minster.

Through the orchard here and there were mountain springs and their liquid voice in the still October sky dripped a tune no xylophone could equal and invited with singing voice to lean and drink from the limpid chalice. Over one spring a half-up-rooted apple tree burdened with apple fruit hung like the very noon of poetry, and apples floated in the spring like argosies of crimson. All and in all no poetry was adequate for that beautiful reminiscent day when the whole world of the apple orchard housed us in. I could hear wherever I was through the wide-spreading apple orchard the homely creak of the wagons burdened with apples. It was a homely and a happy sound. I loved it.

The farmer's wife was putting up tomatoes, and as a respite was picking up apples in her apron to make baked apples for the evening meal. Being bidden, I went to look at them and her. They looked so good. I dare not, as a married man, pass judgment on how she looked. I remember my training. But canned fruit and vegetables (in glass cans) are pictures. I should like to see more of them, and some time when I grow rich I am going to have a cellar shelf filled with all kinds of fruits the ground grows; pickles, and pears and plums, and pickled peaches and beets and beans, and apple butter in glass cans, and then I am going to go down in that cellar and sit and look and look at this art gallery. May the day hasten! It is said in the Beautiful

Book, "God hath made everything beautiful in his season." I should know that now after these years of philandering with the out-of-doors though it were not said in the Holy Book. I entered the farmhouse, and in the "chimbley corner" sat an old, old man whom I had seen seated in the sunshine in the apple orchard taking the sun as if to ripen him as it was ripening the apples, and now is he in the kitchen where the woman is wiping, with her apron, the two quart cans of newly put-up tomatoes and he near the stove, for his blood runs not very fast at his sunset hour and the chill of the evening must enter his blood. The boy comes somersaulting into the kitchen. Life is in that homey kitchen—the old man, the blessed woman, the tumultuous boy. As I come out I hear an apple tired of waiting for the pickers falling to the ground, and I go and pocket it for company for it and me. It must not be lonesome and I must not.

And I hear the car of my host coming up the long winding mountainside and his greeting for his wife, my hostess, and I see the blue smoke (blessed blue wood smoke) straying from the cook-stove chimney and am thinking we shall presently have supper in the midst of the apple orchard. Supper will be welcome, but it will be saddened by the sense that I must leave this orchard land and go down again where the orchard trees are not bending under their blessed

burden of apples. So I start on my last round of observation and delight through this world of an apple orchard in full fruit. I would linger but cannot. Have I not lingered a while, happy, resting, through an Indian-summer apple-orchard day, with God always everywhere and kindly friends and their hospitality sweet and wide as the sky, and should I not be content? I am content but not through. I never would be through with this adventure in leisure. The winter would come and lock the door and bid me go about my business; and out and up and down and along I walked with blithe step and blither heart for my last look of this world of an apple orchard in full fruit. I hear a tree toad singing its same old lonesome song, and the cricket unknowing that its chir soon will be hushed by the freezing fingers of winter put across its lip, and I see the chickens moving sedately toward the roost, and the cattle slowly feeding nearer to the gate of the farmer's house where they shall lie down for their dreams and the night; and I throw kisses to the apple trees near and far and give God my thanks for the heart's delight in a day of such heartsease as will loiter along the dusty road of my heart while eternal life leads me through eventful years; and I wander toward the blue wood smoke in the chimney where the lady of the hill notices me as I appear and says that her culinary adventure of the supper is near triumph, and I see the coming of

the gloaming and the mists hover a little closer about us; and supper ended, with its voices and edibles of hospitality, we dip down into the valley and along the river, and this day de luxe is bound with sunup and sunset and stars are sprinkled on the book's back, and the volume of the day is glad with the poem of an apple plucked from a day when the world was an apple orchard in full fruit.

And now with the apple orchard far behind, and the apple trees standing to catch the wild music of the winter's wind, and the mountain-side having lost its splendor, but not its music, I consider the apple orchard and the wonder of its life. In the spring that wide-spreading orchard was a bouquet which God might wear on his bosom and was perfumed with ecstasy of fragrance. Spring is gone and far passed though not forgotten, and the fragrance of the apple blossoms is inherited by the apple fruit. The apple orchard began in fragrance and in fragrance concludes. What a poet God is, and what a poem it will be to spend eternal life with him!

Laus Deo.

XVI

A JUNE IDYL

I WAS on the way to a wedding in which I was to be the third person in importance, to wit: the parson. Firstly, the bride, secondly the groom, thirdly the minister. I was to be thirdly and lastly, as becometh a minister. Such days as the one I write of, no doubt, had gotten lovers in the notion of June marriages. Nothing was amiss. The sky, the greenery of the grass, the lavish chrysoprase of the trees and every tree undulant as a green wave, the wind being westerly and freighted with all unimaginable odors full of all indefinable sweetness learnt from all growing things. Familiar as a body might be with June days redolent and sweet, this day would baffle him. It was as fresh a creation as the first firefly. There never had been a day like it nor would it ever have a successor. "My wedding day," sang the happy bride with shining eyes. And who could dispute her? Who in his right mind or the region of it would ever dispute with any woman about anything? for such disputation has whence but no whither. But to be disputatious with a lady on her wedding day—clearly that would be the very noon of folly.

Even a lord would not act so. Therefore is this June day set down as the effort of Providence to fit the happy heart of a happy bride.

"Love maketh life and life's great work complete." On such a day, with Love's carillons swinging in the steeple of the sky, I, the parson, journeyed to the wedding where I was to be participant in the eternal gladness of the world.

The road wound across a prairie mainly level, with hills rising a good way off and with slight depressions not ravinelike but rather as a settling of the ground into a saucer, so the things needing drink might find a place prepared for the slaking their thirst. One such our road came past leisurely as not eager to be past it. A swale with lush grasses thick-leaved, and hummocked where the grazing cattle had waded, sybarites of the pastures, with here and there between hummocks, a glint of water with its sheen, a pool of reflection where a leaning flower might see its face; and in the midst of this lush meadow a lakelet. Call it a pond and have done, though lakelet appeals to me as more poetical. However, since Thoreau wrote "Walden" and named it Walden Pond, I will not mince words but conclude that any water called by any name is fit for prose poetry. What else could we think after having lingered over "Walden"? Name it lakelet or pond, still the stars are on its nighttime surface and on it drips the morning dew from the leaning marsh grasses and here the sun-

set pours its divine light and here may one behold the silver sickle of the new-made moon shining quiet and strange from under the world as if it were rising from what Tennyson has named "the under world." In the June sunshine lay the pond fenced in by hedges of the somnolent grasses.

The high sky was in the pond, though a patchwork sky it was, for the trivial water was sown to white water lilies. What poetry have we here on a stretch of prairie! A lily pond with pads lying quiet in the unemotional water and the lilies floating, slumbrous at noon. White boats with golden centers watching straight up into the topmost sky.

Can anybody look at water lilies with a sunless look? I wot not. I do know one man who cannot. That, at least, is not in the list of his inabilities. He looks at the lily and the lily has its way with his soul. God did a thing the day he invented the water lily. I wish I had been there. He did it at the daydawn, I surmise, when the dews were making rain from the cedars and wee rivulets were forming on the ground, rivulets of dew slipping out toward the sea, some sea, some hidden sea remote. What a day of artistry that was, the birthday of the water lily! Mayhap we shall hear about that day in paradise. O paradise!

How long any seeing soul could gloat over a prairie pond flowered out to water lilies with

petals white as moonlight of calm summer nights and their golden centers yellow as the gold of beech trees at their autumn splendor! "Enough, I have seen enough," any right mind would say. For myself I could not think out a loveliness more perfect than a June prairie dipping to a lily pond and sown to water-lily flowers.

But God thinks things out which beggar our expectations. It was so this June day on this prairie. For among the swamp grasses which girt in their blessed hold the water-lily lake, were sown in proud, yet not arrogant, profusion a bewilderment of wild fleur-de-lis. Not a few, though a few of this chaste blue beauty will make a heart dream and sing out like a linnet's song, but a profusion of them such as would shame the counting. A touch of vision would warn you against the arithmetical folly of attempting the enumeration of this field of fleur-de-lis.

I had seen this chaste loveliness many a time, though never enough times. You can never see beauty frequently enough. But I had seen a solitary flower with its enticing shape and poise and color beside a stream; and that one flower created all the spring. And beside a great lake, within hearing of its wrangling waters, I had seen a swamp encroached on by the drifting sands, crowded with fleur-de-lis, so that the whole landscape fairly laughed out loud at its own abundance of beauty. But never had I seen such sedate multitudes of quiet, blue enchantments as

I saw here. They seemed more like a splotch of shining splendor out among the islands of the Milky Way. They would have rendered any place a place of peace and beauty.

But when a water-lily pond whose surface is dappled with lily pads of green, and white and gold of lily flowers and patches of water shining back the sky—when such a place is girdled with a profusion of wild fleur-de-lis with enchanting blue and grace of complicated workmanship which set all expectations at naught, and all the June winds blow; and through all, the bells of love ring out their golden happy clamor to the heart, I call it a June Idyl and no one is competent to arise and say me "Nay."

A June Idyl shall this scene be set down in my memory for the reach of years which we name Life: and then for that sunnier reach of years which God and his angels name Life Everlasting.

XVII

WHEN COWSLIPS BLOOM

THE day was in late April. To be precise, it was April twenty-seventh. Spring burgeoned. I was on a day ride from Winnipeg to Saint Paul on the Northern Pacific Railway. In Winnipeg, Spring was a surmise, a very modest surmise at that. The grass was green in the yards but scarcely visible in the meadows. Poplars were not yet a cloud of promise. The Balm of Gilead was putting forth its leaf-bud, shaped and colored like a thorn of the honey locusts and when broken off smelt like summer in the prime. But, save for the blackbirds swallowing their words in cheerful gutturals and the meadow larks declaring with sincerity that they had come and Spring was not far behind them, Spring was pretty much a matter of faith. To walk by sight a body would have guessed it was in the circumambiency of fall fog.

And the journey of five hundred miles was bearing steadily down into the delight God has named Spring. I think that invasion of Springtime by driving into it on a speeding train and Spring wonder thrilling out to meet you and caress you is one of the rarest ecstasies of life.

Every hour we drove into more Spring, green greeneries, more plowing with the blackbirds and crows and chickens following in the furrows so the farmer might be less lonesome, and through the roar of the train which was in a hurry to get farther into Spring, now and then a meadow lark's voice came with its ecstatic staccato blowing in on the heart when the car window was shut and doubly shut and the train's voice was very boisterous, yet swift like a smile on a face we love, comes the meadow lark's fugue of the breath of Spring.

Rains had been heavy. The roads were soppy, fields in the main were bidding defiance to the plowman though here and there the plow turned up the loam of harvests soon to be. It is ever to the praise of God that the earth shall bring forth its increase and the children of men shall be fed.

Whither hasting, hurrying train? "To Spring, to Spring," chants the sonorous voice of the speeding chariot. "To Spring, deeper, deeper into the Spring, into the resurrection of the earth." It was good to my heart to hear the railroad train turn poet, though, as for that, what is there or who is there, I have not heard turn poet when occasion grows hot as summer breath? There is poetry enough to go around amongst us all. "Love never faileth," is the golden voice of the Madrigal of love. Like the tender voice singing out plaintively as a curlew's call, "Poetry

never faileth." It hath more, and, seeing the Great Poet's bow abides in strength, we may not doubt it will abide always.

The day's ride is from Spring to Spring, and from broad daylight and sunup was through a level land. For three hundred miles not a hill turned its round shoulder to the sky. Prairie, or where prairie had been, and now the fields of wheat were doing their best to look like the vanished loveliness of prairie grass. No rivers, no lakes, no rills, no hints of hills, but near the semblances of swamps or hints of sedate streams poplars stood thick with their green rinds like a growing olive and, later, as we rushed Springward, the faintest cloud of faint green was on them, and still farther onward the sturdier green through which the stems of the trunks rose white through the fresh emerald; on, on toward Spring!

Knee-deep in the Spring shall we be ere the day turns to the dark. Speed on! Though in sooth the train needs no hortation. Spring runs like saps through the engine's heart, one would reckon, the way it runs on triumphantly Springward and is plainly restless in stopping even for a moment at the stations and tugs at its traces and gives the laggard ones scant time to get off the train. Springward!

Now as the afternoon draws on and the sunshine is at deluge of delight, we run amongst the lakes of Minnesota—Detroit Lake and others

—and then my breath comes quick as if I came suddenly on a cataract; and the cowslips run wildly out to meet me. Often had I seen them and often had I watched for them. When the year is young I eye the moist land where the cowslips light their camp fires. I must not miss the sight of one of them. To me the cowslip is as lovely as the daffodil. I will venture to speak my mind though, with sedate voice, lest William Wordsworth hear me and call me out his golden poem of the daffodils to rebuke me with that wondrous voice of poesy.

"I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

"I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodills;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

"Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Then thousands saw I at a glance
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

"The waves beside them danced; but they
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee;
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

"For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodills."

His daffodils: my cowslips. We both are emperors: let that suffice.

One cowslip makes me sing; and here for the first time of my watching them through my springtimes, they came on me in torrents. They ran like a rushing river. They broadened out into lagoons and widened still wider into lakes and then came running and ran a footrace with the train. Like the stars for multitudes they were and everyone is a-smiling. Not a churl among them all. "The day of cowslips"—hold that in thy calendar, my heart. April twenty-seven, in the year of God, nineteen hundred fifteen, when the Minnesota lakes were playing hide-and-seek with us travelers, running to peek at us in their game of peek-a-boo and then running away from us, reticent and then brazen, while all among their marges flowered out the golden cowslips, and when a little stream wandered moodily where rushes soon would build banks for them—there the cowslips come trooping with swift delight like a happy song from a heart in love.

There are days and days and days for all things. Said a hoary voice of a long-ago, "Thou

hast made everything beautiful in his season." Say that again, Golden Throat. That brave saying cannot wither. It must be a perennial song. "Everything beautiful in his season." And was that old Ecclesiastic turned poet looking at cowslips on the margins of Minnesota lakes on an April day when the glory of the sunlight was beyond words to picture and the rapture of the new year was wild like the flight of happy birds flying for sheer love of flight and having no whither to journey? I wonder. Yet were there no buttercups in Palestine. Had He been here, he would have said in languishment of tone as the cowslips in innumerable multitudes sung out to the Spring, "We are here to make you welcome, we are here," "God hath made everything beautiful in his season."

God hath made this day beautiful in its season, beautiful with cowslips, and this is the day when the cowslips have taken holiday to welcome with unapproachable laughter the advent of the spring! "Welcome, Spring, welcome home," the cowslips chime. "Welcome, ye golden laughter, sweet cowslips; 'tis worth waiting a weary year to find ye gladdening once again. A welcome, my cowslips," saith the Spring.

XVIII

DOUBLE POETRY

A MEADOW LARK singing on a pine tree —that is the double poetry. And think of it! How it sweetens the sky, even in the thinking! But the hearing—ah me, what a chorus of poetry it did make!

All my life time have I had the gladdening of the heart at the thought of a meadow lark. That is probably because I am a prairie man and grew up with this bonnie bird of the liquid note. Many a morning, wading through prairie grasses shining with the dew, have I heard his note of sunny cheer ring out with the wild wind breath on it and a whole sky of song behind, around, above. My ladhood drank in somewhat of this music, and as my manhood came apace I learned more of the poetry of God's world and so came to charm my heart on many more of this world's sweet ministries as becometh added years. If as the years pass we love not more things and have not cheer with wider areas of creation, what use have we made of living? We had as well died when children. This world grows fairer with every passing day is the testimony of this one man who has had the song of the meadow lark in his heart for years on years

and listens for it at each arriving spring here with new delight accentuated by the years of hearing it and not in one tittle dimmed by all the songs he has heard. The last song is the sweetest song which has ever slipped from that sunlit breast. So on the prairie where this bird has his festival of delight, there had I known him and his altogether bonnie melody which outwitcheries the blowing wind. And the pine tree, when was it I did not love that secretive musician with the eternal cadence in the voice and the perpetuated tears in the heart? I was not boy nor youth with the pine. I never met the pine tree growing in his grouped majesty of mood and music till I was man grown. Therefore my love was not that of association. Mayhap I learned it of the poets, who are all votaries of the pine. That solitary unsmiling reticence has played his tunes to all their hearts. "The music of seas far away" is forever on the pine. I know spaces where the pines are just out of hearing of the sea. A plunge through and over sand dunes and you are confronted by the old magnificence of the sea with its hoary music. And many's the time that I lie under the drone of the eternal melody of shipwrecks unregretted and am drenched in the wild contagion of sea voices which have come far and have never lost a note of sadness but pour the tears of ages on a body's ears as if that was why the sea had come and that was why you had come to the sea. And then I have gone

back out of hearing of the sea and have settled me as to slumber where no slumber was dreamed of, but just settled me to the droning of the sea-music which heard not the sea, the sea-music of the pines, when skilled as my heart is to distinguish "seaborn music," I confess I could not say what melodist was playing on its harp, sea or pine. "Sea-born music" was I listener to. And often I have tried to skill my ear to distinguish. The song of the pine was so like the song of the sea that I queried, Is not the sea tilting its wave-music over the dunes and am I not hearing sea voices and not pine-tree mournful refrains? How the pine does dawdle with our hearts! A tremulous refrain is what you ever hear in listening to the pine tree at song. It is the mourning dove of the trees. As the mourning dove never has note save of sadness of widowhood, so the pine in its gladdest voices has never merry-making. It hymns funereal tunes. And yet does that subtract in aught from the dreamfulness of the music? Mortal are we, and the runes of death are stretched strings on which the winds of life discourse rare melody. Pine, thou melody somber as the dawn of winter evenings by the gray sea, and meadow lark, with thy voice free and graceful as the waving of the tassel of the corn, yet two together, whence learnt ye this orchestral assonance? Never save this once had I had this double melody. Meadow larks are little given to sta-

tioning them in trees for song. I have not often known this wizard of the prairie to sing in anything capable of leaf or shadow. On fence post, phone post, or the swaying top of some prairie weed, there has this minstrel his station and thence spills his sunlit melody into the wind. Here, on a pine, sat this meadow lark and swung the bell in the steeple of his heart. How I loved the tryst—meadow lark and pine! What orchestra, this, the sunlight playing its tune to the shadow music of the tearful sea, that was meadow lark and pine! I wondered how the meadow lark would thrill had he known the poetry of his melody. One was there hearing him who knew the witchery and loved it and will not forget it while he lives here or hereafter. Has God always some new thing forthcoming? Will every morning in the long and sunny stretch of years eternal, have its new ecstasy? Shall there be new variation on the dial of eternity so that shadow and sunshine shall never be the same in all the long unwearying wonder of the years which flute music immeasurable and with no tinge of sadness?

The pine, swaying a little to the push of wind, and branches at measured music as of a dirge for soldier slain on field of war, and the meadow lark, yellow breast shining out, and from it rushing like the flow of running water where the ways are slanting but not steep,

> "Sweet and low, sweet and low,
> Wind of the western sea,"

sweet and low and yet a voice which blows across the pine tops to the open waters which billow and break in infinite refrain. One more poem of God have I been reader of.

And the day will soon be dark and dark pine will be lost in dark night and the night will sleep, and the meadow lark will hide his happy heart amongst the grasses, but the pine will wake and moan and caress the night wind with its insufferable anguish of a breaking heart. "Soft and low, soft and low," never slumbering and never silent, the pine tree and its heart and harp.

XIX

ONCE UPON A TIME

JULY it was, and in Wisconsin and on the Soo Line on a cool delicious day after a heated term superheated when the country had been at smother for days, and heat prostrations had been the headlines on which newsboys had done business with their strident voices and busy industry. Then came the rain, a whole night of it across the State and across the States for aught I know; but it was the State I crossed so that I speak with unwonted information. And the air was refreshing like a touch of cooling at the hand of the sea.

The clouds cluttered up the sky in huge dishevelment of thunder heads, but frowsled heads torn and tossed about like haycocks after a rain, no single cloud of any definite form but all as if they had been having a romp with the wind and had had decidedly the worst of it.

And, to be sure, I was watching. When I watch not the doings of the outdoors I shall be dead. Till then, am I all eyes for the sights abroad upon any day and all nostrils to inhale the happy fragrances and all ears to catch the momentary sweetness of passing song of happy

birds or splash of wind among red clover or rioting wheat. So I watch. Nobody knows what shall befall me on any day when I am out of doors and the growing world has its wealth of saps at rise through every artery. My perpetual eagerness is on me, only proportioned to the time of year and the wonder of cool sky. All places out of doors are challenges to which I wish humbly but surely to make answer; for the challenge clearly is God's.

My train was rushing wildly into the arms of the wind which tossed about all growing things bonnily. The fields were dappled with sunlight and cloudlight. Let me coin that word? I need it and none will be the poorer for this liberty accorded me. We are all the while needing new words when we are out doors. God makes the things and we must make the words, so shall there be work for him and us, and such labor must always prove a luxury, a serene luxury of spirit.

This panorama of fields thus dappled with, one moment a flash of exulting sunlight and the next an equally exulting cloud shadow, was running fleet as a star past my eyes. The right of way of the railroad might be for giving wild things a growing and life chance, a place once again to have coronation rather than for the soberer purposes of commerce. But both things flourish under one charter. These things must not come to the knowledge of the demagogue lest he bring action for a trust.

The season had been delayed, the previous winter having been the severest in many years, and spring, being frozen in, had been dilatory in coming. Even on arriving so late, it had had its nose and ears and fingers frost bitten and its bare feet decidedly frozen. Thus it was that the shadow on the dial of the year was a trifle awry. It is good to have it so, lest we should grow priggishly sure of things and seasons without taking the pains of looking.

On we rushed through green to green, all glad, all gladdest. No room for dumpishness anywhere, just one rush from loveliness to loveliness. Then the apocalypse in whose honor I write. The right of way was immensely wide, for what purpose I know not, but to what purpose I discovered. Room was here afforded for nature to do some pranks. And she did. We took a run and jump into such a profusion of color and variety of floral decoration as made even an old stager with these bewilderments of God to take a sharp breath which ended in a cry like the cry of discovery. Here was a dazzling huge cluster of black-eyed susans which burnt a hole in the prairie and stayed blazing like sunlight set on fire. Following in immediate succession such a profusion of dancing daisies tall and tossed and white-and-gold-hearted and all at joy of life, and then beside, in quick competition, horse mint, huge patches, so as to blot out the ground with its gentle luster of tourmaline pink.

I had seen much of their unbidden and unrequited beauty, but not in such freshet as this, not so thick-set in the sod nor so bent on showing the sky just what sunset pink on snow it could indite as a real poet when it truly tried. Then hustled into the procession (for "hustle" everything did and "hike," hustled into view and hiked out of view. Whoever invented those words did service for this event. You may say those words are not poetical nor in good form, but you should be told, good friend, that good form in the notion of the Creator is the thing which answers the needs of the time, and these words surely answer the need of this time of the year and me). Hustling into sight with a leap, like the coming of a company of children topsy-turvy with joy and laughter, and fret-free as the wild blowing of a summer wind. That is the way of the coming of things this day along this way. Then hustled into sight dwarf elders which were growing low against the ground and clustered in groups like politicians at a convention, and the flowers were as the foam from sea waves caught and held aloft. The beauty was unthinkable but undeniable. I rubbed my eyes lest I should be dreaming, but when could I dream such a beatific dream as this, spume from a shorewave here at toss on a windy prairie? Sea foam so far back and inland? But here it was. I saw it with mine own eyes; and they are good when I do not wear glasses.

On the shore of this unfickle sea foam far from home were ranks on ranks of tiger lilies. I never had seen that before. Wild tiger lilies had I seen, but by fews, never by manys. What a coronation for a place and day! One tiger lily with its brick tint and its spots of black paled a little as of a faded blackbird wing, is sufficient to thrill the moment of discovery. I have many such moments in my memory; but I had not seen them in companies; only in little bunches like a family with mother, father, and a few children. Here they wandered in literal multitudes, a colony of enticing chrome tints like a multitude of children off on holiday.

Swift on the track of this gift of the day was such a tumult of wild tansy as I had never been witness of. Tall and stately but multitudinous and in color of flower like old ivory. Watch them, reader of this itinerary—the red and spotted tiger lily with its happy territory invaded by the stately tread of ivory-white flowers, every one erect as a soldier on duty and many, many marching, marching. Would you had been there with me!

Then at a turn of the stair of that day the wild drift of a field of flax in delicate flower of exquisite and attenuated blue to rim this profuse variegation of uninvited neighborliness. Blue sky windows above; blue flax flower below on the ground, a faint sapphire flooring for the dome blue and a rimming for the flower fields where the angels had been glad to stay.

All this had I seen on a July day from the window of a plunging train on the Soo, a travel day when weariness was rife and care was plentiful, but a day when through the lavish kindness of the Chief Gardener I had been bid to walk at leisure through some unaccustomed paths in his Eden.

XX

JUNE O' THE YEAR

IT was one of those exulting days of which one, two, or three at most are to be looked for in the whole stretch of any summertime. There are days and days. Any day is a day of delight when water whispers on the shore and the clouds play hide and seek with the sun and the light is bewildering as newly rinsed with a great rain in the upper and lower skies. But when it is June-o'-the-year and spring gladdens into summer as day into dark, or dawn into day, unnoticed, when the skies and the ground conspire with the growth of plants and the flowering of plants, and things of bloom merge into things of fruit, and all these keep one guessing what season of the year this is, then that is June, and June is now.

It is sweet spring and young summer in the calendar. These are all days of appearance and evanishment. Loveliness knows not how to tarry. The kisses she blows from her fingers are kisses of greeting and good-by. The pathos of growth which drips a tear on the cheek of its smiling is that she may not linger. Like the shadow of wind-blown clouds, it does not quite touch us till it is departed.

True as all this is, true is it also that no summer is rich enough to gift us with many perfect days. This day I write of was one of these; and for it the God of days be praised. Day and night for a week had been raining and cloudy and cold. The night air was shivery like North Sea air. The night was made for deep sleep. By the almanac there was a sickle of a new moon (heavenly advent), though we knew it not by the sight of our eyes. Clouds prevented and whispered in rain on the shingles of our summer roof where we could hear in our sleeping room the merest whisper of a drop of rain. A body lay awake rather than sleep lest a single rustle of the garment of the rain should elude him. Sleeplessness and slumber were one in comfort. We can sleep any time when there is nothing else for the doing, but dripping rain must be listened for and listened to when it slips past in the dark. I had hurried to the sleeping chamber in the daytime to hearten me by harkening to the cadence of the rain lest I should miss the patter of a single drop.

On this day I now celebrate the morning awoke without a cloud. Our one robin redbreast awakes the day by the ringing of his morning bell. Who or what would not wake to hear the robin's morning call? The phoebe began her plaintive widowed proclamation that she was phoebe, phoebe, as if certain some one was denying her identity. She proclaimed with added

emphasis that she *was* phoebe. There was no getting away from that unless she married and changed her name. Then a lone crow flew low, almost touching the treetops of my morning lattice on his way to the open sands of the placid lake of great water. A heron flew over the lake near shore, taking her morning way to the sand dunes, where her nest was set among June grasses. Lake Beautiful lay calm as a picture and untroubled as a quiet heart.

I could not resist the lure of the morning, but naked-footed, to disturb not the household, descended the stairs, took one oar, shook the yesterday's sand from my to-day's shoes, and hastened with blithe feet to the curve of the river where my convoy of rowboats are looking at their white shadows in the water and, demure as not seeing me, uttered no exclamations of surprise when I untied one of them from its spile, sunk neck deep in the water, stepped into the boat's tilting, sagging and swaying hospitality, seated me coatless and hatless and collarless and plied my one oar as desiring to see the way I took, and thus I rode taking the morning, dewy, moving landscape to my heart where the mists lay like silver veil on the shore or drifted like visible perfume over the rising dunes or climbed over the banks of the stream and then spread wings and vanished in the forest. Such water lovers and lovers of rowboat have lost much joy who know not the delight of sitting with face

to the boat prow and dipping a single oar held in both hands and thus making noiseless voyage save that the lapping of the water on the boat prow reminds you of all sweet music your ears have ever heard. That lapping of wavelets on the prow of the rowboat is to me celestial as among the sweetest voices in the variegated orchestra of God. I love it, love it.

Down the river, out of the river into the wide expanse of the shoreless water. As you look outward not a touch of wind on the face of the water. This is a sea of glass. I lean and look and see the golden sands at deep depths and the golden rays of sunlight weaving their skeins of beauty on the sands at the bottom of the lake, and stop plying my solitary oar. This dear boat on the quiet lake lies like a lily on a silent stream. The fisher boat up the shore is hauling in the nets and I can see their spoils struggle and flash in the sun as they tumbled to their death. A sweet silence holds Lake Beautiful in thrall. She is the sleeping beauty which only the wooing wind shall know how to awaken. The sun flames and warns the water to cease slumber and awake and arise, but the waters do not heed the sun. They only answer smile for smile while never a ripple starts anywhere. The innumerable minnows dash to and fro in infinite frolic. The underwater world is at play as well as the over-water world. The swallows wheel inland but do not cast their shadows on the mirroring waters of the

lake. The phoebe still makes mention of her name. My boat looks at her own lovely shadow in the water. But we must on. Then I dig my one oar into the crystal wave and make glad way out far to sea. It is so trancing to stand out well from land in this bonny craft and from afar out look at the dunes aflame in the morning sun. The air is crystal like the wave. I see the far north sandheadlands stand up like a cliff of the sea. But my boat and I must turn toward the river waiting for us. Low against the water anything on the shore has a height because my boat and I are part of the water. We are not haughty, only calmly content to see all things on the shore or in depth of wave. Still not a ripple on the water. After long vagabondage on the lake with no destination and no engagement to shorten our engagement with the wonder of the sea and summer sky, the boat swerving to the slightest touch of oar, I turn prow shoreward, go up the winding river so dear to my memory and on every curve of the bank is the sleepy nodding of the redolent green things of water and shore and I note the bashful beauty of the birch trees along the climbing sides of the stream which climb up to the austere altitude soberly yclept "Mount," and where the river turns and looks long miles inland I anchor and lay the oar down for rest while I who plied it go to breakfast with the dear folks of my household.

Think you this day is ended? Be more witful. 'Tis just begun. The boat and I are getting ready for the real day. This pretty outing was mere make-believe and is poet-prelude to the poem of the day yet to be written. Thus I go and get two women very dear to me, and who never are quite out of my thoughts and bring sundry edibles and cushions, and hats and umbrellas to obsquatulate the freckles of the day's journey under the sun, and with blankets and baskets and kickshaws, and knickknacks and giggling in various meters, we three enter the waiting boat; and one woman in the stern and one for a mermaid in the prow, and I for stevedore and miscellaneous roustabout as also, speaking poetically though sweatingly, the gondolier, set out. The day is beginning well. I now have the oar locks and the other oar to keep the one oar of the morning company. So we set out on the voyage of the day.

The wind has spread her sails just a wee bit. A boat-sail would not flutter to so trifling a wind if one were to call it by so imposing a name. The morning is cool and sweet. The river widens upward at this part of our voyage. A line of birch trees gleams white along the shore, holding up their tops of green tracery against the sky. The day is very sweet. My cargo smiles and sometimes sings.

The sky inland as we voyage is piled with clouds anchored and white. A thing I have

never seen so persistently anywhere else is always in evidence here, that is, that however cloudless the Great Lake sky may be, though not a wisp of cloud hangs its veil anywhere, yet when I turn my eyes inland up this river I have never once known the clouds to be absent. They lie there like great fleets with sails apparent but not touched by any seawind, or sometimes they lie like a quiet sea islanded with innumerable icebergs. I love the sight. It is filled with a haunting suggestion I cannot explain. It tells of another landscape where abounding quiet holds lasting Indian summertime. We were rowing upward into this land of dreams with the fleets of cloud; and flocks of icebergs like huge sea gulls lie to the forward. So with the music of dipping oar and the music of the voices of my beloveds, rebuking the gondolier or encouraging him, upward we go where the clouds always gather and the fleets are never broken by a storm. Over us as I ply the oar, high-up clouds begin to scatter, chased by the wind, and later the wind touches the repose of the stream and blows fresh and wistfully; and at the landing where we shall picnic the wind gives us welcome, and the boat brought to land and the cargo discharged, we leave the folded oars to rest on the bosom of the resting boat and make our happy way to a deep and blessed shadow of some brawny beeches which hold eternal friendship on a hill which gives wide view of the windings of the

river and the marshes and the meadows, homelike with grazing cattle and the farmer making hay on the lush meadows. And over the soft ground as we come the wild strawberries grow and the wind makes all the wild flowers dance with glee. One of my sweet voyagers gathers flowers and is a picture of dear delight to my heart. Her dress blows in the wind and she, stooping to pick the flowers, is a picture no painter could paint. And still the wild strawberries are everywhere. Well, this is paradise.

The meadow lark calls from the grasses; the killdeer shambles about the sky with plaintive call; the bobolinks are at June rapture and invade the blue sky with their ecstasy and flutter to the meadow all music, which though a body were a sphinx he would be sure to be caught in the rapture of:

O it is June o' the year!

And here I, the chef extraordinary, gather pine branches and light the fire and proceed to cook the steak while the women are gadding about the meadow lit with flowers with the swift wonder of the swaying grasses in the wind. A man nowadays has no time to go gadding about with beauty. He must be body servant to beauty, and so I here with the pine music over me and the shadows of the beech trees not far away, and the wind making merry with my hair, which has no hat, I lean to my task like a galley slave chained to the oar. Such is the lot of man; but I am a good cook and a Christian

and do not sulk, but when dinner is served give the dinner-call and the beloveds come and are seated with much laughter on the blessed spongy ground and are served by the man servant and they criticize with feminine generosity of criticism, but do not forget to kiss the cook; and that soothes my wounded feelings. And when they brag on the cooking I am a happy galley slave though bound to the oar.

This dinner business and the kissing business ended and the chef discharged and the gondolier retained, we all make glad to lie down in the windy shadow of the beech trees with shadow all but impenetrable even to the stabbing sunbeams of this golden day. Just to sit or sprawl when the wind comes unwearied and has made mad journey over a wide water and up a winding river and over a meadow sown to starred flowers and pine trees and grasses which have the everlasting smell of the dampness of the world, and the half weariness bordering on sleep which characterizes the rushes and the reeds and the true river meadow, just to wait and laugh out loud without explanation of the laughter, and see things too deep for words but not so deep as the thoughts they compel, and to stay bareheaded and let the wind work its will in dishevelment, and rest the heart with the unknowing comfort of the rush of joy from the world so good to be in and so packed to its center with radiancy and welcoming.

In due time we start to the wild strawberries again, all of us, not as wanting the berries but wanting their witchery, their smell, and blush on the fingers that pick them, the perfect riot of wind-blown flowers sullen because the wind will not let them stay long enough to get hold of a single strawberry and then to stop and look and inhale the smells all mixed together in hilarious breaths and then down to the boat which by this time is rested from its voyage upward and ready for its homeward trip.

The beloveds are aboard and both of them trail their hands in the water and finger at the lily pads while I row among them, and say sweet things of each other and to the humble oarsman with the singing heart; and slowly we go as not needing to do other than loiter amidst the day's delight, and with the river all bubbly with the wind and touched here and there to foam we make our home-bound way to come toward evening into the shadow of the pine-crowned mount, where in the shadows the boats lie waiting and my boat of the day comes with a contented heart to its anchorage with its sister boats, and their shadows and its own, and thus wait for the night and its whippoorwill call and its stars.

XXI

THE CURLEW CALL

A JUNE Sunday morning in a delayed spring. I was in eastern Illinois near the Wabash River as it holds diligently to its business of keeping Indiana and Illinois apart. My business there was to dedicate a beautiful country village church with a tower and a bell of golden throat which should, through dawning and darkening days, spill down on the heads of this countrystead the call to think on and worship God.

After breakfast I started out Bible in hand to read that precious book under the morning light of the Sabbath day. But whether to read the Bible or not it is a heavenly book to hold in the hand, for it has innumerable springtimes shining through it and singing through it and perfuming it. A little way back of my host's house I saw a big wandering barn that beckoned, I thought, a little slyly as if making a sly wink for me alone to see. I slyly winked in return, as courtesy demanded, and with apparent uncertainty in direction as wood smoke on a sleepy evening hesitates aloft before it dreams south or north or west or east—and then, my touch

of harmless affectation being concluded, I dived into the barn. I did not miss my guess. It was an old, old barn built wholly of oak boards, beams, rafters, mow floors—a thing which in our day had been a fortune of gold. In this barn was room enough for a young windstorm to have tired itself out in. Horses munched their hay. The wind strayed in and strayed out like wandering birds intent on nothing much. The sun was trying to smoke hot to give delayed wheat and corn a boost for catching up. I fooled around in the barn a while. I smelled of the hay in the ancient mow. I pried about in true neighborly fashion and only honest intent. I wanted to find eggs hidden in out-of-the-way corners. But the hens were not egging: they were singing about their intended activities, that Lord's Day. While I dote on eggs I prefer a hen's song. It is so blithe, so breezy and confirmatory of intention and proof absolute of the happiness of the hen's heart, that I never miss that happy nature song if I get a half chance to hear it.

Pulling an oak peg and softly opening an oak door, I am admitted to a green barnyard lot across which went a path of immediate directness. No sauntering pathway made by the lingering feet of cattle coming from pasture at the sunset, but a hurry-up path to get to pasture where breakfast was waiting for them. At the end of this path was a lane, one side hedge-grown and the other side a fence old but not senile,

on the other side of which wheat was growing with a silver touch upon it looking toward the gold of harvest, and the wind making merry and being giddy with the silvery sheen of the wheat. The lane went dusty and printed with hoof marks. The wind was gentle and smelling of growing things.

So I sauntered with a Sabbath heart full of great gratitude for mercies beyond reckoning and thus came to the lane-end, climbed over the wooden gate and came into the pasture where horses were grazing near the gate, content as if knowing it was the day of rest. Cattle were near by at breakfast, and were scattered about the pasture, and chickens were a long way from home. They were chicken gadabouts. One red rooster far too far away from home for a lone man, made much of my intrusion and cackled a persistent, exaggerated cackle, which was the ladylike thing to do but scarcely becoming a man. Why I irritated him so he did not distinctly state, but he may have noticed my Bible and long coat and have taken me for a preacher. Whatever his ground of antagonism to me, he made that antagonism noisily apparent. In due time he shook the dust of his feet from him and went his manly way and left me to the kindly solitude of the grazing horses and cattle and the contentment of the Sabbath morning. One lone tree grew on the east edge of the pasture near the gate. I invaded its solitude and sat me down

underneath its invitational shadow and leaned against its bole. The morning though early was hot and shadow a mercy to be desired. There I sat, the gladness of June around me, the sky lifting its Sabbath dome above me solemn, serene, exultant, and full of God. There I sat happy guest of the shadowing tree and exultant sky and the kind, good God. My Bible open before me, spake of holy and high things. My heart was in a mood of worship as my heart ought always to be. I heard a robin singing near at hand in bubbly melody. I heard a quail call across the pasture from a field of corn just high enough to toy with the wind as it passed by. God has not many bird-voices which charm and cheer me more than the bob-white call, so liquid, so full of content and so far carrying, and sweet as the ripple of water, so in keeping with his trig form garmented so faultlessly in his spotless garb of spotted brown, so swift of whirring wings in suddenness of improvised flight, so unimmigrant an inhabitant of our summer and winter, so good a friend of the crops of wheat and corn and the farmer, who so seldom knows the philanthropist the quail is—and to hear his flute-note come over the pasture full of spring and summer merriment! It is a healing of the heart to hear this bonny songster make merry with the golden day. Once I saw him on a distant fence post exulting in his Sunday song and I exulting in it more than he. A whole day of Sabbath joy was

in his throat and to me all the Sunday was sung across by his song. I had gone to my preaching in full content through the day, long in the music of that voice.

So was I considering when, to my surprise, I heard a killdeer and then saw him staggering about the sky as on broken wings. His was a drunken flight, drunk likely by an inebriation of the June day. I could certify it was enough to make bird or man drunk with delight, had they hearts to feel the land and the sky and the wonder of God. No marshes were hereabouts and what this killdeer was doing here I could not guess, though it was enough that he was here. Inquisitiveness is no wisdom when loveliness is near. Let loveliness suffice without the poor pin-prick of curiosity. I like to be incurious —just to bask in the presence of the thing-to-be-desired and to-be-admired and to-be-rejoiced-in. That is how to deal with a thing of beauty which is a joy forever, as friend Keats has immortally phrased it. I have on my little patch of ground on which I pay taxes a wild rose whose tint is the color of pure flame. It is as if a rose leaf sprang into exultant fire—a puff of prairie fire and then out forever. Why shall I in a fit of curiosity address me to inquire the how of the flame instead of giving myself to the rapture of this astonishing blossom? Why be part scientist with why and how instead of all poet with rejoicing song and ebullient delight over the thing of loveliness?

So I take the killdeer with wandering voice and staggering flight into the open window of my heart and leaned against my tree-trunk and took the wandering shadow unthinkingly yet wisely.

Then a mourning dove fluted plaintively as if heartache that even June could not abate was using this bird as a harp full of tear-drip music.

Enough. The day has had its holy and happy choir of sunshine and wandering path and wandering cattle feet and satisfying hedge-row, and field-row, and growing grain and caressing bird voices, when, O wonder! a curlew's call like a scythe mowing its swath in the prairie sky made me leap to my feet and dance like a leaf in the wind (a rather portly leaf, admittedly). A curlew call! Only one curlew had I heard in twenty years, and that on a great plateau among the mountains of Montana in companionship of the daughter of my heart when we were vagrantly taking our way to Careless Creek. That weird voice had flung me into a mood of a thousand memories of prairie days, and June ecstasy made with the prairie wind. The undiluted Montana sunlight, the far distances through the amazing splendor of light which had made great painter Turner, worshiper of light, laugh out loud in his solemnity of spirit, the rim of the landscape and the mysterious mountains so remote as to seem things of cloud and yet were they things of earth, substantial as the world—and then all

of this glory to be made a sounding gallery for a single curlew call! And now, here among farmed fields and neighborly dwellings and a prairie which had forgotten it was ever prairie at all, and with prairie grass not even a dim memory, a curlew call! Blessed be the Kind God for this unexpectedness. He is ever and anon thrusting on us like an unexpected cloud and the sound of running water when we know not a water brook is near. The curlew call—that was to make the day of spring immortal to my memory. To me one curlew call can render one sunny year radiant and memorable.

I cannot tell just why the curlew call affects me so and uses my heart as a woodpecker uses a bare branch for an instrument of music. It haunts me. It is not alone thrilling, it is beguiling and haunting.

It is as if the prairie were lifting its tear-drenched, melancholy cry for all those wide breadths it had once been and was not now. That sickle curlew bill flings out that weird voice like a tear-wet banner. It is a wail that is the very ecstasy of sadness like the mad song in Lucia de Lammermoor. I recall when I heard the curlew first long since as a prairie lad and how I heard that strange pathos flung out on the prairie wind at morning or evening where the curlew had his nest, and that voice has dwelt with me like a memory of a gray sea seen at dawn through all these distant years.

And now I hear it in an utterly unanticipated locality. I am elate as if saluted by a voice I thought was dead. Enough! Yet not once did I hear my curlew call, but twice, thrice, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven times! What a happy count it was, though I mislike arithmetic.

O happy day, a memory fitted to make a gray heart glad with sunlight and a sad heart swift with song.

The church hour draws near and I hear the church bell calling across the pasture, and I take my backward path toward that holy habitation of prayer and consecration and the love of God. But through the voices of the choir, and the rapturous melody of the hymns of God, I heard the voices of dead summers in the curlew's call; for all the things that God has done are fit cooperants of the house of God.

And in my golden Book of Days I write down "God's June Sunday when I heard the Curlew Call."

XXII

GATHERING CHRISTMAS MISTLETOE

Locus: Oklahoma.
Tempus: Day before Christmas.
Dramatis Persona: The Author hereof.

ANY day when a lover of outdoor things finds a new outdoor thing is a holiday to the soul, and if it were reverently called a Holy Day there would be no flippancy of speech or spirit. I could make a rosary of such golden days, the beads whereof should be more than dandelions on an April field. The mere mention of such things makes me wistful as a November wind, full of the floating of fallen leaves.

To hear some new melody sweet nature has composed is worth wandering across a hundred summers to listen to, and then it is recalled that there is no need for so long a wandering and waiting for its bubbling up like a bubbling song. I who never grow blasé in nature things need no inviting to take me out into the country where a witless stream wanders witlessly and heedlessly as having no need for haste or any thought of destination and where in the wide bend, a field of ripened corn unhusked blazed in the naked

Oklahoma sunlight and sussurated to itself all day, bidden thereto by the constant blowing of the wind which seemed not to stop to catch its breath, even as frogs who fill a long night with a quaint vociferation of comfort and unaccounted for joy.

I was free-hearted and alone. The Christmas presents for my special beloveds who were at home were labeled so all I needed to do was to fill them in the happy stockings on the chimney. I committed to memory the birds' song of Jesus which the latest-come apostle has preserved for us as in amber: "It is more blessed to give than to receive," and I was quite ready to be a recipient of that beatitude. So, carefree in a swiftly blowing wind in the rustling corn, I came afoot. "Footing It in Franconia" is the title of a book of loitering in the hills of New England. I am footing it in the haunts of the mistletoe.

Footing it anywhere if there be leisure is sufficient delight for me. Standing on the good ground anywhere under the sapphire sky is to me an ocean of comfort and delight. And when the heart is full of love and sweet suggestion of wife and child, neighbor and friend, yesterday and to-morrow, to-day and God, and then the feet are free with no hands beckoning return and no voices bidding hurry, then the whole sky and ground of things bids feet and heart to loiter and enjoy. Then is there bound to be a festival of joy wherein the wave offering of

contentment and feast is the gracious logic of the day.

I needed no Horatius Flaccus, poet of the Roman midday, to bid me "carpe diem." I had a saying sweeter to my soul than his, saluting me. It was the voice of the great Chief Poet out in the open field as springtime when the winds were with swift compulsion bending the wild flowers into an ecstasy of prayer and laughter and adoration at the feet of the Great Gardener in praise of the Lord of the wind and flowers. Enjoy this day is Christ's constant invitation set to song. I am ready and exuberant for the joy of the day.

I had my lunch with me, to wit, a beefsteak and a loaf of bread and a pinch of salt; and there was the winding stream and the riot of fall leaves coming and going at the wind's will in their desperation of delight. I knew there must be somewhere out of sight of anything save the sky and the nearby naked trees where I could scratch the match and light a fire and see the blue smoke curl and lie down on an innumerable company of russet leaves odorous and balmsy and watch the blue smoke curl from the fire, built from branches which the winds had hacked from the trees in profusion for my coming so I might cook a beefsteak on the very best culinary instrument in the world, namely, a dry forked stick which the winter and snow and rain and winds had sanitized. No city "chef" nor "café" nor

"eat" hectored me with their affront to hungry, or the strident cry of the aproned waiter, "Ham and straight up," should slap me in the face when I should become an hungered. I could eat to the music of wind voices in the trees and the spacious sky for a dining room and no haste nor breaking of dishes to garnish the meal. So no famine confronting me, nor schedule to be met calling my name stentoriously I left the railway station nothing loath and footing it blithely but not hurriedly I came on the way of my adventure.

Speaking openly, I had come to hunt mistletoe. The trees were leafless and so thrust into prominence the clusters of mistletoe hanging far aloft which in green June had been hidden in June greenery, but now in winter leaflessness when June blossoms were all spent and June leaves all dropped from its dead hands, among the petals of its innumerable roses, nothing green blazed out in the sky but the mistletoe. In summer the greens are so preeminent and luxuriant that green subtracts from green and one tint of green subtracts from another tint of green till by the compulsion of multi-greenery the wonder of it all becomes less heavenly. Now, in December the day before Christmas, no green was anywhere visible save that of the classic mistletoe, swinging high on beckoning branches of leafless trees. It was a thing to invite the soul to walk leisurely and languidly or lie on the ground

reposefully and regard unhastingly the vivid green of the swaying mistletoe.

In a world of hurry it is so refreshing not to hurry and not to need to, but to make faces at haste as at a school-teacher when her back is turned or school lets out in spring. Haste has been so intrusive on my leisure that I dote on snubbing her (or should I say him?), and the wind puffs her cheeks and the trees swayed and creaked as thinking themselves rheumatic and the blaze of green mistletoe badgering me as to say: "You think it is winter. Dolt, it is June; see my green at the trees' top." I said, "It is June, deny me if you dare." When I was too filled with comfort and my heart was too full of praise in such an hour of peace to let the pert mistletoe prod me into disputation, but changing from one elbow to another I winked and said "Mistletoe, have your way," and shut my eyes and listened to the voices of the December wind fretting in the treetops although they were not Decemberly.

Should this piece of vagabondage come to have a reader, she-he or he-she might captiously suggest this essay is entitled "Gathering Christmas Mistletoe." It is miscaptioned. Hie thee, loiterer, to thy task. Ah, friend (he or she), you mistake this case. This is a loitering loiterer's expedition. This is no rush telegram, but a "male" order. Come, reader, be thyself loiterer. Give thy speed surcease. Speed thee loiteringly.

Do not finger the leaf of the book in thy hand. Let the wind idly flutter the idle pages. Do not gaze, just look. A gaze is a concentrated look and that requires energy. Looking may be just bovine, looking and seeing nothing or seeing things as in a hazy dream far across as in an Indian summer landscape. Lie down as the idle cattle do and possess thyself in peace while a wandering leaf rustles past or a blue jay loses its temper because he sees thee lying under his tree. I am gathering mistletoe in easy stages. I am prospering in my quest when I idle with the stream and dance with the leaves and listen to the wind, not caring what tune it pipes. It is Oklahoma winter, the day before Christmas, sown wide and wild with sunlight. I fairly hear the sunlight drip from the branches of the cottonwood trees; and the sound of dripping sunlight is a music not often heard but held in high esteem of those who listen for seldom voices under the blue sky. Though seeming inactive, I am lethargically whetting my knife to be surgeon for the mistletoe not as having a knife out of my pocket, but as being likely to do so at any moment. I might, I might not; that is the humor of it.

The sky is June blue, not the milder blue of December. It has no almanac; it needs no chronology, or better, it needs no chronometer. It has a memory of June days and is looking it in the face. So have I. June skies may well become that June day of the year, the Christ

Day of the year, so it is welcome and at home at this blessed day before Christmas.

Lest Christmas day be here or ever I gather any mistletoe, I will to my deed. I rise lingeringly, dive into my pocket leisurely, take out my jackknife leisurely, set down one foot before the other leisurely, take my coat off leisurely, ditto my vest, for I must climb trees in my quest, and tree climbing to my certain knowledge is hampered by clothing. I will retain trousers and shoes lest my cuticle be handled harshly. And now forward to the ascent. I start toward a cotton wood which I see mistletoe monopolizing. It has a crusty rind. Yet I am no coward. On. It has no branches near the ground, yet I will essay at the attempt at climbing. Just when precipitant to do this deed a covey of quails whirs up from my feet. They set my soul a-flutter like a fluttering leaf with their swift rising and swifter flight. They rise like a young cyclone taking to wings and sky. They disappear swift as a thought. They mistake my intent. I am no huntsman with death in my advent, but a peaceful Christian huntsman hunting Christmas mistletoe, under which osculatory auspices I shall kiss my wife and daughters, and likely enough my son. It will be half-past kissing time and time to kiss again when we shall come under this particular branch of mistletoe for which I now make quest.

And now, after this sweet intrusion of winged

beauty, I set out toward the cottonwood of the surly rind, and unsociable look, but with this mistletoe cluster defying my acrobatic powers. My solitary regret on this voyage of acquisition that happy, happy day is that there was no witness to my feat of scrambling up that corrugated trunk and rushing down the same trunk in a most unpremeditated, and I will allow, most unministerial way. The tree was a noble bole. Its growth had been from long ago. Few things in nature are so noble as a great tree trunk, and few tree trunks as noble to my eyes as the cottonwood trunk. Great gashes in its bark as if hacked there by a crusader battleax or the sharp ax of a lightning, it frowns defiance and despite upon me, not knowing, I choose in Christian charity to believe, how partial I am to cottonwood trees, trunk, branches, leaf, and summer music of the fretted leaves and spring, fresh green in summer time shining like metallic trivial shields and catching the rain on their roof of foliage ere it kisses the ground and mingles with the dust. Had the cottonwood tree known this, it would have bidden me welcome to its high places. However, being modest and diffident, I gave no hint of my preference but essayed my arduous ascent. There was where the cloud of witnesses was needed. So much fun in seeing a man not do what he came to do and did not do should not have gone to waste. It was like wasting kisses. The incorrigible cottonwood tree

would not smile even gruesomely. It was mad. By and by I was mad too. I was skinned. I am bleeding, and various parts of my anatomy are out of fix, and I am at the bottom of the tree instead of up in the tree branches where the mistletoe clusters. I had slid down; I had bumped hard. I had been nearly up though slowly, and had come totally down not exactly rapidly but with a speed of electricity and without interruption and no one to see it! O the wicked waste of fun. After several unsuccessful attempts at anabasis and other sundry extemporized and highly successful katabases I was winded and skinned, with pantaloons rent in sundry places (but they were ripped before). I am no lackwit whatever the cottonwood tree thought, and had brought pantaloons—survivors of other climbing episodes. They were old climbers as well as old timers.

As I sat on the ground in unhesitant fashion where I had been deposited by the force of gravitation and the surly mood of the cottonwood tree, I bethought me of my beefsteak and loaf of bread and pinch of salt. Happy thought. I will increase my strength and might by cooking and eating my edibles, and then, probably, bringing up a heavier attack, I shall take the citadel. So I fished out my matches, gathered some glorious wolf-brown leaves together, some dead cottonwood branches strewn about, struck the match, saw the match flame catch to the leaves and the leaf flame grow ardent and the branches

catch and then the fire; and the precious perfume of leaf and branch fills all the air and the blue smoke lifts its fitful, shifting cloud and blue as the blue sky is into which it climbs. Then I piled more dead branches and hunted a forked stick and impaled the steak and proceeded to be a sybarite of the woodland. Talk about cooking! I am a chef for a Cæsaric household. Then I ate my own cooking—a thing which few cooks dare to do, or if they do, do not survive. I ate my dinner from the stick till there was left only the stick, which, I being no gormand, did not eat. Then I sat and looked at the wood coals and the still rising smoke and heard the south wind blowing north, and the lotus nepenthe of the wind and the wood smoke and the dinner-eating-under-the-sky all but overcame my sense of duty and my spirit of adventure. For, whatever others think, I vow I came to gather Christmas mistletoe.

So I arose like a knight of the grail and went back to the aggravating and impertinent and un-Christian cottonwood trunk where the mistletoe was jesting at me and covertly giggling at my many mishaps in ascent and equally many successes in descent. Conclusion: I climbed the tree. Can't you hear me do it? The beefsteak and bread accentuated by the salt had done business. My heavy artillery and infantry had done what my cavalry charge had failed to do. I ascended. The mistletoe quit giggling, but the cottonwood was madder than ever.

So, laughing in spirit and with my lips, I gathered the curious green-branch parasite with its fruit, white touched with green. A strange plant it is. The seed is viscous and soft as a baby's flesh; and to wonder how it can plant itself on the rind of a cottonwood and take root in that barren soil; and, more of a mystery still, how it can take root in the rind of an oak, that soil hard as a frozen ground inside the arctic circle. With the brown, sweet soil where the wild spring flowers grow, mistletoe seed will have nothing to do. It spurns that lovely hospitality to things that care to grow. And with inexplicable aspiration it takes its perch on the swaying branch of a gnarly tree. Parasite it is, but airy parasite. It aims high. The ivy roots in the ground and climbs the trunk and mantles trunk and branches. Not so the mistletoe. It spurns the ground. It lights like a silent bird on the high branch. It cares not for the tree trunk. It wants height, and light, and the cradling of a swaying branch rocked by the wind. The oriole builds its nest on the far branch-tip; the mistletoe, not quite so adventurous yet adventuring far from the trunk, clings to the wind-blown branch and there roots its pretty wilderness of startling green which in winter when branches are bare and shadow and music are no more, rocks its startling emerald when the world about it has forgotten greenery.

While the wind cut capers and the angry

cottonwood did its best to shake me down, or at the least, to make me battle for my mistletoe, I cling here hardily like a sailor to a mast on windy seas and on swaying ship and show this particular wind and this particular tree what a much of a man it has to deal with; and I proceed leisurely, as befits a pleasurer, to do this particular Christmas shopping. All's delight. I gather the mistletoe and toss it down trusting to the wind to cushion it for its fall. Swaying like nesting birds, I pursue this Christmas gladness and gather enough mistletoe to give festival for all our Christmas kissing.

I come down leisurely as becomes a man who has succeeded in his quest, gather my mysterious Christmas spoils, and in the blowing wind and clear sunlight dimming now a little toward evening, begin footing it home in happy return for the happy day and happy voyage in a revel of adventure doing a thing I had never before done.

And when I came to the house that held my loved ones, the lights were lit and I was given a kissing-welcome under the mistletoe of my own gathering, which was a welcome home to sow sunshine across my landscape of life for all years everywhere.

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